



THE MINNESOTA REVIEW

THE LITERARY TWENTIES, II: Arthur Mizener, "Scott Fitzgerald and the 1920's" John "Knocky" Parker, "Jazz and the Twenties." FICTION: David Cornel DeJong "Second Journey on the Um," Katharine Topkins, "Vista Del Sol." POETRY: James Wright, E. H. Templin, Sister Mary Honora, Raymond Roseliep, Roger Hecht, Elizabeth Greacen, Paul Kendall, Earl Hendler, Stephen Sandy, Margaret C. Kane, Richard Lyons. ARTISTS OF THE MIDWEST, II: Willis Nelson. FEATURES AND REVIEWS: David Schoenbaum, Walter Sutton, Sarah Youngblood, John Wallace, James Wright.

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THE MINNESOTA REVIEW



*atque nunc vir sum, abolevi
puerilia*

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NOTE: The editors regret that due to commitments beyond the author's control THE MINNESOTA REVIEW will be unable to publish as promised Mark Schorer's essay on Sinclair Lewis. The essays on the twenties, published in this and the fall, 1960 issue, were originally given in a series of lectures on the twenties sponsored by the Extension Division of the University of Minnesota, and under the directorship of William Van O'Connor.

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david cornel de jong

SECOND JOURNEY ON THE UM

THEY WERE the only ones who got off the train at the small station, which looked Oriental, Wouter thought, but perhaps only because his thoughts had an Oriental sort of bias, what with the impending need to meet Cousin Willie. He saw, too, that his mother started looking uneasy, but Tante Hinke kept chattering away as if she hadn't left the train at all. Bart, on the other hand, stood staring at the departing train, his hands anxiously deep in his pockets.

Then Bart said softly, to keep Tante Hinke from hearing, and after he had turned with slow deliberation from looking at the train: "See, Wout, you can see the pigeon house from here. See, but not a single pigeon."

Tante Hinke had overheard. "Pigeons aren't gulls that you can see from anywhere," she scolded, and as if to prove her lesson she pointed her umbrella at the gulls on top of the dike. "You mustn't expect the impossible, Bart."

Wouter saw his younger brother blink and then blush. It was a sore point, those pigeons, with Bart. He'd be accused of killing them

the next moment. At eighteen, Wouter tried to recall how he had felt about such troubles when he was Bart's age. It didn't work here, and not while he was anticipating Cousin Willie.

Even if in the train, which Tante Hinke called piously "our little um train," she had also said: "Ah, but Wouter, you do look the poised young gentleman. I just know it will be valuable to Cousin Willie to meet someone his age."

"Cousin Willie is at least twenty-one, and with an Oriental outlook," Mother had answered.

When not talking about Cousin Willie and Tante Ko, and at all the stations the train stopped, Tante Hinke had tried to coax Bart into naming all the "um" towns in the right order, perhaps to distract Bart's attention from her alternate chatter about Cousin Willie. When they had almost arrived, Mother had pleaded: "But you will try to be civil and kind to Willie, in spite of everything, won't you, Wouter?"

So here they were standing in Grandfather's town, and suddenly, whatever had been laying low by way of guilt and shame assailed him furiously. The sunflowers did seem to be listening. Even if grandfather was dead now.

With Tante Hinke's umbrella properly furled now, they were at last ready to leave the station platform. It seemed to him, that for this occasion, Tante Hinke's sentiments lay practically lacquered on her polished lenses. Noticing his stare, she shouted: "You can be embarrassing, Wouter," and she tucked a bit of black lace around her throat, a durable black, because she was intent on mourning for her father at least a full year, and particularly here in his town.

No one had wanted Tante Hinke to come along. Last night Father had said to Mother: "You know I can't go, Helena. Nor do I quite see the need. I certainly can't cope with Willie and his silly mother. I can't bear Ko. But if poor Wouter isn't enough, why don't you ask Hinke? She'll take charge."

As if she'd felt a summons, Tante Hinke had been at the house ten minutes later. "Helena, we've got to go to Mother's," she had announced. "I don't know what she wrote you, but I gather from a letter of Ko's that she doesn't want us to come, even if Mother knows it will be good for Willie to meet Wouter. Bart needn't go; it was only four weeks ago when he was getting over the measles." She stopped to brush her black coat with a clothes brush dipped in a saucer

of strong tea, poured during her talking from the teapot. "Cat hairs. And unlike Ko, I like practically all animals."

"Both Wouter and Bart are going," Mother had said.

And so had Tante Hinke, naturally, but immediately Bart had sought him out anxiously: "It's something I have to tell you, Wout. Before you see that Willie." Bart then had told him once again about Cousin Willie, as if he hadn't heard it ten times before, how Willie wore a long black dress but with white Dutch trimmings, because that seemed less pagan to Grandmother.

"Not a dress, Bart," he had corrected him. "That thing is supposed to be an East Indian sari, because Willie has always worn them in Java, ever since the Chinese servants started dressing him in their own way. And because he's sick with something, and doesn't want to talk."

"Oh, I think he can talk," Bart had protested. "And I know he can walk. I know, because he climbed to the pigeon house, and then he dropped dead birds from the holes to the ground, young pigeons, except they weren't even dead yet. And when he walked out of the barn, he pushed a dead pigeon in my hand, but it was still warm. And I dropped it on top of the others, a little pile of dead birds." Bart had looked away and trembled and Wouter knew that Bart had never told anyone else that story. Before he could ask him why, Bart whispered: "But Tante Hinke thinks I killed them. Because I couldn't tell her in the train who had. I couldn't. Even if she made me memorize all the um towns. And now she's coming along again, and Mother never even asked me."

No matter then what the guilt was that awaited him at Grandfather's house, he had to console Bart first. But Bart didn't wait. "Because I wasn't in school then, because I still had the measles, Wout. And I didn't even know all that about Cousin Willie, and Grandfather had died . . ." Bart stopped, because Grandfather had been Bart's God, almost.

But Grandfather was my conscience and my accuser, Wouter had thought, still unable to help Bart. That had been in August, too, last year. He'd gone to the barn looking for Grandfather, and hadn't found him. He'd climbed to the loft, where Marijke had her room. And he'd gone into Marijke's room, and when he came out again, Grandfather had been standing at the foot of the stairs and he had said: "Wouter! And you my namesake! What were you doing in there?"

"I was going to look at the pigeons," he pleaded.

"The pigeons are overhead, above you. Nobody has been near them, Wouter. And I heard the giggling in her room, and you so young and so clean-looking too." Grandfather had judged him, and he hadn't known how to clear himself. He hadn't even known how far he had gone wrong. He had hurried down the stairs, past his grandfather, suffused with shame. And the amazing fact now remained that Grandfather never had told anyone, not his father or mother, but had died with his knowledge.

And now Bart. Suddenly he asked: "Was that girl there that time? That Marijke? You know, Bart, that scullery girl they've had all these years."

"I can't remember," Bart cried, but hardly interested.

Now he turned every word over again to find a solution, as they walked toward Grandfather's—no it was Grandmother's now—house, while Bart kept peering up at the dove cote in the cornice of the high barn, Tante Hinke kept up her inexhaustible chatter, and Mother walked in private silence. He even realized that he walked self-consciously, aware of the women at their windows, peering at them. "Don't walk so stiffly, Wouter," Tante Hinke said past a public smile. "You're not on parade. Or do you think that these people here are already comparing you with your cousin Willie? Ha!" The next instant she added: "I am really surprised that neither Mother nor Ko met us at the train. It must be that they don't want us."

"The train was five minutes early," Mother said.

"That makes no sense. You can hear that train coming from every corner of town. You ought to know, Helena, when we did ourselves. It was like second-nature," Tante Hinke argued.

But then Grandmother and Tante Ko came out of the house to meet them. Tante Ko looked wierd, the travesty of a displaced woman from the tropics, with a pink ribbon braided through her faded red hair. She didn't look at all like Mother's sister. "How incredible she looks," Tante Hinke mumbled, but the next moment the four women were kissing each other.

"And this, of course, is Wouter," Tante Ko cried. "Oh it is so nice for you to take off a day at the Lyceum and see my Willie. Oh, and little Bart again, and no more measles, we hope? They frightened Willie so. We simply don't have measles in Java."

Grandmother looked on, stately in mourning black, and then tried to catch Mother's eye. No one was listening to Tante Hinke until she asked: "But surely, Ko, you don't keep Willie indoors on a day like this? It's almost tropical."

Tante Ko shrugged and pulled a sagging shawl around her. "Oh, but these North Sea chills."

"What'll you do in winter?" Tante Hinke taunted.

"In winter?" Tante Ko looked martyred.

It happened the next moment and it seemed like an indictment. The house door had opened again and there stood Marijke, all red scrubbed flesh and big bones. "The tea's set," she announced, putting her bare red arms akimbo. She stared at Wouter and then dug the toe of her wooden shoe between the flagstones. "So I'll go and take my nap now," she added, and walked toward the barn.

"But when did Marijke come back? You never wrote me," Tante Hinke asked.

"Willie always had servants, remember?" Tante Ko answered.

"We let her go for three months," Grandmother explained with freighted delicacy. "She went to a farm. But there were too many men there and with her unfortunate habits, we'd had her come back. After all she'd been in our care since she was ten."

"Does she dress Cousin Willie, too?" Bart asked.

No one answered him, and the four women were now looking at the graveyard across the hedge, at the new stone on Grandfather's grave. They started making a ritual of sorrow, until Tante Hinke said: "I could go for a spot of tea first," and they moved in body toward the door which Marijke had left ajar.

Wouter looked up where Bart was staring, up at the silent dove cote, stared then himself at the little window beneath it, where a red hand pushed the curtain aside and Marijke looked boldly down upon them. Bart saw her, too, and said: "No I don't think she was here last time, because if she had been there she would have stopped Willie from killing the pigeons."

"We'd better go in, Bart, and have tea and meet Willie."

"I'd rather not," Bart said. "Let's go up to the pigeons."

"Not now," he said stiffly, no longer watching Marijke at her window. He turned abruptly toward the house, and reluctantly Bart followed him.

They walked silently down the familiar long hall with its heavy-framed mirrors and Rembrandt prints. There was a change, however. On the floor, lapping up against the wall, and smelling summer musty, lay Tante Ko's Oriental straw mats with their curlicue patterns. And on the wall hung three little pagan lanterns, one above each peekaboo mirror. He hurried past the two steps that led up to the closed purple door, behind which Grandfather had died. They might have tea in that room, so that the women could remember and weep properly.

They came upon the four women standing in close conclave in the center of the living room. Wouter saw the blue tiles past them, with all their Bible scenes. He saw the fussy ormolu clock between the reed plumes on the mantle. But he did not see Cousin Willie, not until the women parted, and Tante Ko said in a social voice: "Oh, Willie, this is your cousin Wouter. You'll be so happy to meet him." Tante Hinke burbled: "Your own age, too, Willie." Mother said firmly: "Don't be silly, Hinke."

There was Cousin, and no matter how he had been warned, he was taken aback. Willie was sitting in Grandfather's old chair, wearing a long black gown with white trimmings. He sat in profile, with his muled feet perched on a footstool. His black hair looked like the hair on a doll, and though his long jaw remained immobile, Willie's eyes shifted from left to right, and his lips parted slightly over yellow teeth. "Pretty soon, Wouter, Willie will have composed himself. You see, he expects you to speak first," Tante Ko directed.

The other women were busying themselves with the tea things. He extended his hand, and his voice sounded choked, when he said: "How are you, Cousin Willie?" Willie's long hand remained supine in the black lap. It was the hand that strangled young pigeons, Wouter was suddenly reminded. "Willie is cold, Wouter. Willie is always cold," Tante Ko was saying, as if Willie could not hear her.

Willie flickered a sly smile. Then his yellow cheekbones realigned themselves once more, but his eyes rolled to Wouter's stomach and then down his legs. At that moment Bart said in a piping voice: "Good afternoon, Cousin Willie," as Tante Hinke had instructed him to do on the train. Willie ignored him too.

"I wish Willie would get over being shy with men," Tante Ko complained, but she seemed to be praising him obliquely.

"Wouter is practically your age, Willie, and he wants to hear all about Java," Tante Hinke shouted, balancing a sugarbowl.

"Willie is truly shy," Tante Ko seemed to be rebuking her sister. "And the ways of men are just odd to him."

He could no longer stare at Willie. He joined Bart, like another small boy, to study the familiar blue Bible scenes on the Delft tiles. The Bible story was there in chronological order, except that on every tenth tile, in deeper blue, Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, while a deep-blue lamb called attention to itself in pale blue bushes. Even so, he saw Willie push off one of his silk slippers. "He needs his shoes," Tante Ko said, "Marijke should have put them on, before she went to sleep."

"Marijke should not put on his shoes," Grandmother said. "Not with what he does to her with his feet."

"Oh, he's only a playful kitten. He pushes her over, you know, and then she giggles. He thinks that's so funny, because our Chinese servants were always so serene and silent," Tante Ko explained fulsomely.

"He pushes his toes under her skirts," Grandmother said defiantly, as if at last she intended to have her say.

"Oh, matters like that are so differently understood here," Tante Ko argued. "In this stern and moral north country, with the North Sea making everything grim."

After that the women remained terribly silent. Tea was going to be served in the mourning room where Grandfather had died. Tante Ko added plaintively: "But a young gentleman like Wouter will surely understand how ridiculous it is."

She was forcing him to join forces with her. She was compelling him to forgive her reprehensible history. Long ago she'd run off with a colonial soldier and Willie had been born in Java. Now she was back in Holland with Willie because life in Java had become so untenable among the revolutionaries. Her husband was presumably still there. Ko and Willie had arrived three weeks after Grandfather's death.

Oh, it was a mercy Grandfather was dead, he thought, when he saw Willie winking at him. He went hurrying after the three women with their tea service, and noticed that Bart followed close on his heels.

Tante Ko who was fishing Willie's shoes out of a closet, was saying

in a muffled voice: "I'll have to put those shoes on you myself. It seems that Marijke must have her precious afternoon naps. The dolt." The women were so slow getting into the hall, that Wouter could hear her say next: "You may have your shoes, but I don't want you to go up to Marijke's room this afternoon. Do you hear? I want you to behave civilized like your cousin Wouter. Did you see how Wouter dresses? It would be better for you, too, in this damp country."

Then they were in the mourning room, where Tante Hinke ceremoniously opened the bedstead doors wide, saying: "I can see his lovable face on that pillow. I can see him great, even in death." There was the interior of the bed, the covers turned down, and red apples and yellow cheeses lay like a still life to be painted on the shelf above the pillow. Wouter turned away from it, to watch the amber tea being poured into frail Java cups on a little table with a batik cover portraying a Javanese war god. Beside him stood Bart in tense dismay. The door of the room had been left open, and Willie shuffled past the door over the soughing oriental mats.

"But Willie has to go to the toilet first," Tante Ko protested to Grandmother, as if meeting an argument.

Tante Hinke blinked past tears through her clouded glasses. "Don't you have any of Father's pigeons left? Bart here seems very anxious to know."

"We haven't any of Father's pets left," Grandmother answered. "So when Marijke came back we had her clean everything. The goat stalls and your father's desk and nook. Even the dove cote. After all, her room is in the barn loft, and she is very tidy in spite of her peculiarities."

"Then all the pigeons died?" Tante Hinke persisted. "The last time Bart wouldn't tell us a thing, how it happened, and there was that pile of little dead birds."

Bart clutched Wouter's hand, but Grandmother said evenly: "Neither Ko nor Willie have any feeling for animals. Though Ko maintains they don't sacrifice pigeons in Java the way they do in the Bible."

"In Java the servants take care of the animals," Tante Ko said with dignity. "It was expected."

"In the end I was even happy to give our poor cat away," Grandmother said with eyes averted.

Unexpectedly Mother said to Tante Ko: "Must you keep Willie

dressed in that sari thing ? With that haircut ? And be waited on hand and foot. You don't expect to go back to Java."

"Who knows," Tante Ko answered, significantly studying her gold lapel watch, because neither of her sisters could afford any such finery. "Others should not condemn him for having been brought up differently."

"But he was twenty-one when you left Java, and there must have been civilized people," Mother continued stubbornly.

"And who are civilized people ?" Tante Ko asked. "I think it would be better to respect this room where Father died."

In the uneasy silence that followed Wouter kept thinking about Willie in the barn, and then he could no longer blot out last summer's misery. When he hadn't found Grandfather in the barn, Marijke had signaled to him from the loft. Standing in the open door of her room, she had with a clumsy defiance lifted her skirts, displaying white and quivering thighs, in such terrible contrast to her red hands. He hadn't even known his purpose then of following her into the room, and nothing had been completed anyway, because he had been stricken with the grossness and madness of it all, but when he had wanted to leave, she had held onto him, giggling . . .

"I wouldn't trust Willie in the barn with Marijke," he was astonished to hear his own mother say.

"We don't," Grandmother said.

"Oh," Tante Hinke warned. "Oh, little pitchers here," and she searched for her father's lost face on the pillow.

"Don't be an ass, Hinke," Tante Ko cried. "Wouter, why don't you go and call Willie. No, Bart, you stay here."

"Well, Wouter is almost his age and is a man practically," Tante Hinke said virtuously, as if she was relieved that she could put Wouter's manhood to proper use.

"Wouter," his mother said. But nothing more. When he walked out of the room, Tante Hinke said: "No, little Bart had better stay here. Innocence is so precious. And there aren't any pigeons left, didn't you hear your grandmother say ?"

Then he was suddenly alone, niggardly alone, with his guilt. Even Grandfather couldn't prevent anything now. He could not even throw anything now into unforgiving misunderstanding. "Poor Bart," he mumbled, as if to his own lost self, as he hurried past the

revealing hall mirrors. Outdoors the sunlight swept over him, making him feel exposed. He walked to the fence and leaned on it. The only motion he saw down the street came from the nodding sunflowers.

He turned and looked up at the empty arched holes of the dove cote. Nothing stirred at the little window beneath it. "Poor Bart," he said again. The barn door was standing open, inviting him in. When he reached it, he called tentatively: "Willie. Cousin Willie." Then he walked into the barn, and saw the four neatly scrubbed goat stalls, each with a square of linoleum on it. Just beyond them the glossy green door of the men's toilet stood open. Naturally, Willie wasn't there. Still deeper in the barn, underneath a lace curtained window stood Grandfather's old desk, all its cubicles cleaned out, and a tea cozy spread over its top. The chair had been pushed against the wall with finality. All the tidyness screamed that Grandfather was dead.

The stairs to the loft started just beyond the desk. That time, last year, when he'd come out of Marijke's room, his grandfather had been standing there, his blue-purple eyes indignant.

"Willie. Willie," he shouted, but his voice was too shrill. No one answered, so he started to climb the stairs. The door to Marijke's room was closed, but over the partition which didn't reach all the way to the eaves, he could hear giggling. The way Grandfather must have heard it. He could still retreat and wait at Grandfather's desk for Willie to emerge. But this was such a different matter.

He climber higher, almost whispering: Poor Bart. His eyes went searchingly to the silent dove cote beneath the eaves. He didn't want to understand. "Willie, you're wanted for tea," he cried before the closed door of Marijke's room.

The door opened and Marijke stood there, unexpectedly fully dressed, but he recalled that she hadn't undressed that time. She smiled at him and then she said complacently: "Now be careful, because Willie is jealous." On the bed behind her there was Willie lying naked, smiling. His sari was draped over a chair. Willie kept smiling companionably, and he knew that Marijke must have told him about herself and him last year. "I had to tell you you're wanted for tea," Wouter said, and Marijke giggled.

"Willie isn't afraid," she said then. "But you can tell them what you think best." She had stepped aside as if to invite him in, and Willie grinned more broadly. But he found himself running down

the stairs, and kept running past the desk, and past the goat stalls and across the sun bright yard, into the house, stumbling into one of the little lanterns.

The mourning room door was still open. Without showing himself, he shouted: "Come on out, Bart. Let's go to Grandfather's grave," and added as in afterthought, "Willie's on his way." In the room he saw only the polished toes of Tante Hinke's black shoes. He hurried away, and felt relieved when he heard Bart come pattering behind him.

After they had pushed through the gap in the graveyard hedge, Bart said: "I was glad to get out of there. They were all looking at Grandfather's bed and crying. And get out before Willie came back, and I don't mind looking at Grandfather's grave with you, because all of them, they'd want to go away around by the proper gate. Did you see any pigeons?"

"There aren't any."

Bart remained silent until they reached the grave, an oblong with rank grass on it and a stone at its head with name and dates and Gothic letters saying: "Gathered In Abraham's Bosom" and then Bart said: "I suppose because of those tiles. Every tenth tile with Abraham. And I don't think you liked Grandfather so much, did you, Wout?"

He didn't answer, and Bart hurried on to add: "It was maybe because you were older, and had city ways and clothes, which Grandfather didn't like much. I'm sure he wouldn't have liked Cousin Willie at all. What was he doing in the barn, Wout?"

"Willie," he answered righteously, as if his grandfather could hear him, "was in Marijke's bed."

"Oh," Bart said simply. "Was she dressing him?"

"No," Wouter said with such preciseness, that Bart looked up at him and said surprisingly, "You don't have to tell me. But I think if Marijke knew he killed the pigeons she wouldn't be so nice to him. Because he did."

Hurriedly he said: "Let's go to the top of the dike, Bart. We can see the tower clock from there and we'll stay till train time maybe. And they can see us, if they're worried."

"It was not at all nice of you two to stay away all that time. I think

your grandmother was really hurt," Tante Hinke said promptly, after all the fuss of settling her and her bundles on the train was over. "And it is a bit odd that Willie didn't come in for tea at all. After all, Wouter was there to teach him some of our Dutch manners."

"I think Wout and Bart had a better time on the dike," Mother said. "I think it was better for them."

"In that case, what did we accomplish, Helena? We know, of course, that Ko doesn't want for money. So I can't see Mother's peculiar worry. And she does almost act as if she doesn't want to touch or look at her own grandson, at poor Willie. Mother really disturbs me."

"Does she?" Mother asked briefly. But she turned her eyes from her sister and suddenly she looked across the compartment and smiled an understanding smile at Wouter. Whatever she understood, he realized, wasn't tainted with forgiveness. Suddenly he wished she could give the same smile to poor Bart. Instead it was Tante Hinke, who said: "Oh, I suppose, Bart, you had to climb to the barn loft and see for yourself that there are no pigeons left? As if that changed matters. And you might have acted your ripe age of eighteen, Wouter, and shown him he can't avoid life that way. Even if he had the measles last time. Frankly, I despair of men, young as you are. They have so little integrity. For instance, where was your cousin Willie anyway when you went to call him, Wouter?"

"In the toilet," he answered, but looked at his mother.

"What a thing," she cried. "All that time, in that hot barn? Perhaps he was really cold, or possibly he got all entangled in that sari-thing." She giggled, but when no one joined in, she grumbled. "Well, keep your private opinions, and with your smart young minds make of it a thing that has political or social impact, which excuses everything. But it doesn't excuse bad morals and bad behavior on your part, and you boys both seem to be making a terrible effort trying to hide things from me. Just because I never had sons perhaps."

Suddenly, with his hand searching for Wouter's, Bart began reciting all the "um" stations on the line: "Ansum, Wetsum, Opersum, Lempersum, Raansum, Wiertsum, and then in between Halverwegen, and then come: Madsum, Doeselum Wilkum, Parsum, Leonsum, Kerdsun, Geeldarsum and Blidsum."

"Ah ha, he's reciting the 'um' stations," Tante Hinke cried trium-

phantly. "He *is* feeling guilty. The last time it was those murdered pigeons. What is it this time, Bart?"

Clutching Wouter's hand harder, Bart recited the names all over again. Defiantly Wouter joined in, staring bitterly at Tante Hinke. With the last three names even Mother joined them. Tante Hinke turned her face away. The train rocked to a stop at Wetsum, where an old man with straw tucked into his unpainted wooden shoes got off with concentrated deliberation. She kept staring fixedly at the old man, even while Mother said: "Let's have done with that moral nonsense, Hinke. Let's look at this mad thing, without confusing my boys with the madness. You don't have to be a boy to be able to do that."

"If I were a boy, I'd chose the mute innocence of poor Willie," Tante Hinke sniffed. "I shall remain loyal to the unfortunate and innocent."

james wright

On the Foreclosure of a Mortgage in the Suburbs

THE FRIENDS of my childhood
One after another have fallen behind
Payments
And stones.

Each year their own children
Avoid them a little more often.
They have to get ahead.
Don't they?

For my part,
I have been dickering with the representative
Of a Western state, to have my stiff
Dumped into some more or less reasonable body
Of water. As I get it,

All you have to pay for
Is shroud, fuel, and labor.

Three Stanzas from Goethe

That man standing there, who is he?
His path lost in the thicket,
Behind him the bushes
Lash back together,
The grass stands up again,
The waste devours him.

Oh, who will heal the sufferings
Of the man whose balm turned poison?
Who drank nothing
But hatred of men from love's abundance?
Once despised, now a despiser,
He kills his own life,
The precious secret.
The self-seeker finds nothing.

Oh Father of Love,
If your psaltery holds one tone
That his ear still might echo,
Then quicken his heart!
Open his eyes, shut off by clouds
From the thousand fountains
So near him, dying of thirst
In his own desert.

(NOTE: The three stanzas above are translated from Goethe's poem "Harzreise im Winter." They are the stanzas which Brahms detached from the poem and employed as the text for his "Alto Rhapsody" of 1869).

To My Teacher, After Three Years

Once I was sorry you were dead, but now
In twenty more brief days the wind will call
Over its shoulder, whinnying colts of snow
Gallop before you till your eyelids fall
Like dark stars. I do not know where you go,
For the strange horses leave no tracks at all.
Day after day I stand alone and stare
Down roads that lead into the empty air.

I was a fool to mourn you, now you need
Nothing at all that I know how to give.
The doves tumbling in trees above my head
Know the right word to comfort or forgive.
Illiterate hopheads drift among the dead,
Darkening the constellations. I must live:
I strain to catch the smallest living sound,
While you ride silent horses underground.

In twenty more slight days, the cold begins,
Twenty lean horses stumbling home at night.
The leaves turn. I do not repent my sins.
The burdocks cling. I took three years to write
One book of leaves that darken under rains
All over hell's half-acre. Now the blight
Turns back to fight the worm's deliberate waste:
We rend each other, murderers to the last.

I Regret I am Unable to Attend

True pieties have to do with the living,
Who are afraid.
I think the dead, if they feel anything,
Feel just fine. They would just as soon
Be left alone,
Thank you. They have enough of a good thing.

So I am not coming back there
(At 3 P.M. Aug. 22 dark suits please)
When you plant her.
I think I am afraid of the dark deputies
Who are always taking down names and addresses
In the county boneyard
Of my hell, where my friends, such as they were,
Are.

stephen sandy

Squatter

I FELT THE wind plunge through the stars tonight;
I swung my briefcase with the blowing trees.
At home, as I drew out my books, I found
a squatter spider at my briefcase rim.
My second finger triggered by my thumb,
I shot it out across the room, a star
of legs that reeled, a burnt out Catherine wheel
loosed from its gravity. A bird means well
that flips from its brimful cup of brothers
—but fumbles down, too new to know his air.
My bandied spider stammered to the floor.
Yes, it crackled to a stain beneath my foot.
A dab of bloodless blood sticks to my thumb;
a paper shucks it off. And I page through
my book, the ink-webbed pages.

I have
no thorn of spittle on a bobbing tongue. . . .
Not one intruder I have met has won.

An American Pilot in Morocco Reunited with his Wife

Where clouds accumulate the fabula
of foam against sun, swell against rock,
stones prod new sun from the sea and throw
songs like mane from the ridge of shore.
We stand on your high balcony
beside your potted stripling orange
that bows and whips like a tattered flag
braving the shore wind; brave device
to bring these rocks!

Binoculars

gather to your hands the shore
where bent combers in their frayed djellabahs
amble from tin can cabanas
combing Ain ed Diab for beads or bottles.
And men descend from Casablanca
in troupes for calisthenics; now a boy
sings out where his mother scrubs sheep hides;
a girl and a wave break into a run
where players bathe their polo ponies
in the surf.

And you and you whom I love
descend cascades of sun-washed stairs
from the cool Babel of villas
to the pebbles of wet light, down
to the wind-planed plank of sea. I see
you stop to greet the shrilling woman at her goats.
And you tardy two, meshing with Afric noon
like the two southwending flight-worn birds
slowing at last into the longed-for land
will pay no mind to that foaming sea
champing at this intelligible busyness.

Nelson Tanner's Smallest Daughter

One backyard off
I watch you pirouette
among lawn chairs and garden tools,

closed in a love where only you are audience,
dancing, dancing for all the block to see.

How hard, if he comes home to supper.
A man come home picks up the lawn,
and you.

How freak to you, legs thick and worsted
and fearfully high above,

the edged face that's paid the taxes
— how goatish to your gracefulness!

Your smile will never be tendered to
a garden kinked with stubble, nor fingers trust

cheeks that time leaves overgrown,
how trimly kept.

Your limbs more legs than arms
falling, tripped on a hoe's straight shaft,

how gainfully are like a bird learning to
be with wings.

So carefully dressed and yet

organdy spinning wings, a blur slow-motioned, slowing
against flypaper lawn.

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Boy Blue

By milkweed pod
and weeds' lobed leaves, nose down,
you nudge the sod, a mole-hilled world for bed.

On haunches rise,
and the sudden, dust-crooked light
starts in your eyes. One shadow over, hear

the cricket bend
to dogged zithering; from
a blue jumble of houses, hear mom's call.

Dad's car careens
with hollow clanks toward the house,
and angry screens harp back, and cranky hinge.

Riding the half light
the hawk streams carefully home,
a dusty mouse in his shopping bag of hands.

Boy, blue, go back,
your yellow spoonbread waits.
Their workday must be hashed; your meal grows black.

The Woolworth Philodendron

Among the plastic flowers one honest one
graced Woolworth's floor: a real dodo in a green-
house of smilax and excelsior, a sort of proto-
gew-gaw, if you please, it was so dada
in that museum of small cheers,
leaves snapped and torn by the sheer
relentless legs of ladies foraging
for comfort; in a plastic pot, the real thing.

Suspecting it to be alive, I brought it home.
Five months it sulked in a leafless dream;
through grillings by the daily sun it never broke
its dimestore trance, tight-lipped as rock.
And now it is April in the pliant bones and strange
to note the beaten juices fuse and plunge:
a green prong spirals up to the blaze, unplugs
revenge for ladies' grazing and ungrateful legs.

The shoppers' world is washed away — how fine
to see my green tooth cut the sunshine
and make a brittle pact with the sun's plan!
But it's more than the tender gesture of a jungle vine.
I watch it coil to careful multiplicity
through my weeks of boring work. I have begun to see
a careless wildness, long-leaved and green,
mesh with black plots implicit in the sun.

sister mary honora

Contingency

YES, we have observed amenities
extending ungloved hands. But why the silence?
I see you wear the ear gems I sent
you from abroad; and how those moonstones quiver.

The pompon on your hat is trembling.
Let me stir up the smolderings on the hearth.

Now watch the flames eagerly enfold
the log that yesterday knew life, needed not
this indoor fire to make it glow like
autumn maples. Pardon, I'll mention only
the extraneous — skirmishes near
mountains — nostalgia for the U.S.A. —
so that no kindling clause of mine will
effect a flame and leave ashes founded on
a heart red like a Flanders poppy.

Parable

(for a budding poet)

Amorphous, with all connotations implied,
was the Northwestern Greening, though it had vied
and won, in flaunting bouffant in spring,
over all other apple trees.

In
late October, the harvest comprehensive
found as the final test of this abortive,
one scrawny pippen, lacking the art
of rhythm and proportion.

In sport,
a pilferer caricatured the pome, but
a connoisseur would have "A" plussed the core.

Cut,
this hunchback dangled the misshapen
plaything through November discipline.
Sleet sheared through the orchard, shaving bark to bone.
All limbs were sleek, save the Greening's. It alone,
holding its shaggy arms akimbo
with branch wires awry, gave the bun-
ting and chickaree cote angles.

December
found tufts of whiteness, chiffon, and gossamer,
at intervals, not on Grimes Golden,
Jonathan, Wealthy, but on the crone.

Saturday Evening Penitent

He thought —

how frightening repentence for defection;
not the avowal for the lapse or freak affection
but rather the dilemma of contingencies
clinging like bearded ivy. It did but tease
the soul, the fate of thallophytes,
after the hurried scalpel rites.
One branch of virtue now will dry,
another surely slowly die
(where limb lent rapture to the fungous wing)
because the quick hand loosening
merely dislodged a mortal parasite
and left the naked wound to bleed lichen white —

selfishly unmindful many other trees needed the trim
or whittling before Sunday arose on the altar's rim.

roger hecht

Physical Therapy Ward

(In memory of Phillip Timberlake, teacher.)

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold,
thou art there."
— Psalm 139: v. 7, 8.

YOUR FIRE-RIDDLED nerves may never flow
Smooth under skin again. Take note of it.
Courage is rare and you are ripe for it,
Yes, ripe, and rotten with a violated spine.
If sobeit as it is now, prepare,
Poet, for conscience's abandonment in grief,
Loathing, frustration, fury, fear, despair,
The end of physical desire,
The abdication from the world you know
And violent engagement in
A marriage with your chosen sin
Since any marriage needs profound belief.

Take note of her who with irregular breath
And aluminum canes can yet support the day
Of nemesis by falling flush and free
Between the start and middle of her laugh
Till you stretch arms, legs, spine in fierce delight.
So long as every day is nightmare-taut
And ninety seconds from your damned poetic death,
Take note of fear:

If you make your bed in hell, prepare to place
Your soul there soon for life and death's disgrace.
For God's sake, try, try to fall to life
Despite it must be flawed and may be brief :
The final fall is less than six feet far.

With intermittent vision, lightning nerves,
Consider the several dead men you have known,
For instance, Phillip Timberlake, who tartly spun
Not too funny obscene anecdotes. He was
So derelict in defense that he was gay.
Did gayety cause arrogance? You do not know
Or need to know the fount of that man's joy
Or what if anything his laughter did for you,
Any of you, students once. If memory serves
To call him out of his residing place,
Poet and patient, honor the dead, catch grace,
Let his recusant shadow go

Back to the circling past where it belongs
And honor the girl with justice as she is.
On ulcered ankles, drooping legs, she goes
Up and down with canecrack. She hasn't tried to veer
From the ward's sudden slat-wood floor.
The place of pain is a square ballroom
Without the feeble lights, the decorated walls,
The cluttered chairs, the tinkling, standard dreams,
Clichés winding in gauzey streams
Of smoke and laughter, the search for prepared vice
At exorbitant prices since all's well that pays . . .
While in these wards, shacks, hotels, warrens, mansions,
jails,
The screams first scratch, then shake, then drop, stop,
reach standstill,
My God, the earth is hell: all's ill and wrong that wrongs
Thy spirit where what mortal creatures fare
As though Thou wert not here, not there, nowhere.

richard lyons

This Island Coin, This Silver Sea

HERE WHERE a fungus carried in the dew
Precipitates upon the flesh its mute
Invisible disease, an infected crew
Assembles: listen, brothers; look you, suit
The action to the time. Death grows by inches
But not now, yet, here. The green capital
Accrues.

When the time's ripe the coffin pinches,
Forecloses on this transitory principle
That vegetates endeavor like a weed.

Crusoe with a notebook wanders here,
Seeking the mark with a pocket full of seed,
To plant his island in a sea of fear,
To reap the far insurance that alone
Should hedge away (but won't) the eventual bone.

SCOTT FITZGERALD AND THE 1920's

THERE IS A very obvious pitfall that yawns before anyone who undertakes to talk about an author and his period, a pitfall that is no less dangerous for being obvious. Imaginative writers are not historians, and the better they are—no matter how representative—the less they resemble historians. They have in them little or none of the generalizing and quantifying impulse of historians because they do not know the world as a play of something called forces and tendency on things called groups and classes. Imaginative writers know their experience of the world, not an abstraction from it, and know that experience symbolically, not logically. There is nothing mysterious about this process; it is the way we all know our experience a great deal of the time, so that every time we begin a story by saying, “a funny thing happened to me today,” or “wait till I tell you about . . .” we are doing, in our humble way, what the imaginative writer does. That is, we are finding a particular person acting in a particular way at a specific time and place significant of something beyond himself. It is worth repeating the “funny thing that happened today” only because that thing embodies a meaning for us, a meaning that may, when the person who tells the story is a gifted man, give us an understanding of our time different from the historian's but complementary to it and—in some respects, at least—more revealing.

Scott Fitzgerald had an imaginative sense of the experience of the 1920's, was indeed a writer so closely related to his time that he was in danger of being wholly absorbed by his sense of it and of writing

books that would not survive it. But if you are not careful to make clear that in saying this you do not mean his work is history in the usual sense, you are sure to land in trouble. I have almost never touched on this aspect of Fitzgerald's work without having some one in the audience rise after the lecture to say that he personally lived through the 1920's without ever wearing a coonskin coat, reading *The American Mercury*, hearing Paul Whiteman, or entering a speakeasy. Certainly hundreds of thousands of people—the vast majority of Americans, in fact—did. Of course Fitzgerald's work tells us nothing about the 1920's in this sense. But one might as well argue that Shakespeare's plays tell us nothing about Elizabethan England because Hamlet was a Dane, Macbeth a Scotsman and Lear, if anything historical at all, God alone knows what.

The meaningful question to ask of Fitzgerald's work is how much it reveals about the quality of his time, the movement of attitude and feeling in it; how much it penetrates to meaning and motive, that is, in the period, however statistically unrepresentative may be the specific particulars it selects from the period to convey this understanding. These things, too, are a kind of history, perhaps the essential kind of history, and of it Fitzgerald's sense was extremely acute. Whatever he was writing about and whatever his other interests in it, he was always aware of what it suggested about his time and place. Thus he will remark in passing:

By 1927 a wide-spread neurosis began to be evident, faintly signalled, like a nervous beating of the feet, by the popularity of crossword puzzles. I remember a fellow expatriate opening a letter from a mutual friend of ours, urging him to come home and be revitalized by the hardy, bracing qualities of the native soil. It was a strong letter and it affected us both deeply, until we noticed that it was headed from a nerve sanitarium in Pennsylvania.

In an important sense, there is more history in that paragraph than there is in all the conventional social histories of the 1920's put together, even though Fitzgerald is ostensibly talking about a statistically minute minority of Americans—the intellectuals of the period—and about only three of them, none of whom is, in the full sense, even in America, since two of them are expatriates living on the Riviera and one is in an insane asylum.

The advantage of such an imaginative grasp of life is that it can look at a time and a place and see past the normative statistical for-

mulas, the pious falsehoods, and that exercise of a tenth-rate poetic faculty called the advertising business that produces what it likes itself to call "The Image" of America. I do not mean that even a fine imagination is always right; far from it. No doubt, in fact, the egg-head view of America is as frequently wrong as the mutton-head view. But right or wrong, it is always concerned to reach through the appearances of things to their essences — not, of course, as Mr. Tate has told us in *The Forlorn Demon* — directly, but indirectly. I suppose the way the imagination oftenest goes wrong in the ordinary sense is by becoming subject to the distortions imposed by its private experience, for it is ultimately always alone with itself, can never "prove" anything, even to itself.

What it does know, however, it knows as experience. Fitzgerald's favorite poet, Keats, felt the importance of this kind of knowledge so strongly that, as he said in a famous letter to Benjamin Bailey, he had "never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reason." Because he had never been able to, he cried out for a life of "Sensations," — that is, the felt understanding of the imagination — rather than "Thoughts" — the logical conclusions of consecutive reasoning. That is why he said that "what the imagination seizes as beauty — that is, *experienced* knowledge — must be true." Fitzgerald loved Keats as he did because he too had that conviction.

It is the astonishing flowering of the imagination in this sense during the American 20's — most strikingly no doubt in our poetry, but in our prose too — that justifies our special interest in the period, however silly some of the manifestations of that interest in the popular press may be. America had had its great writers before the 20's. In fact, it had had four or five in the nineteenth century who were probably greater writers than any of those who appeared in the 1920's — at least this is, I believe, so of the prose writers. But writers like Hawthorne and Melville and James were isolated giants — isolated not simply from their society but even from the society of their fellows. We know the pathetic and unsuccessful effort of Melville to reach an understanding with Hawthorne; we know the artificiality of the relation between Emerson and Whitman; we know the pitiful failure of Thoreau's famous call on Whitman; we know Henry James's remark to the group in Edith Wharton's drawing room at

Lenox, after he had read aloud a poem of Whitman's: "One cannot but deplore his knowledge of foreign languages"; perhaps most pathetic of all, we know that Melville and Whitman lived quite near each other for years without, so far as we know, ever meeting at all.

The result was that though the imaginations of these men were undoubtedly profoundly affected by their times, they achieved no common sense of them and could never deal directly with them. This is still a problem for the American writer, so that there is a sense in which our best prose writers are often still producing, not novels but philosophical romances—which for all I know is a greater form than the novel, but does not do one important thing the novel does do, that is, present a verisimilar image of its world. Hawthorne and Melville certainly wrote romances, fictions that are located at a distance of time or place from their own world; James may be a more arguable case, but I think he did too. At least when Ford Madox Ford, in his large, easy way, asserted that there was a period of his boyhood that he "passed very largely in Paris, and very largely in exactly the same society as that in which Newman himself moved," people laughed at him, quite rightly, since there never was—as Henry James clearly recognizes in the preface to *The American*—any such society. *The American* is a romance. So, surely, are most of Faulkner's novels. But if this difficulty in dealing directly with the author's world still bothers American fiction, it is clearly not the problem it once was, and it is not, I think, because in the 1920's there was a sudden flourishing of talented young men in America who popped up all over the country, filled with a common conviction that it was possible to produce serious works of the imagination directly about American experience. Moreover, these young men quickly found one another and formed that loose, anarchic, strife-torn society that still constitutes the intellectual community of our time—intellectual underground, perhaps I should call it. There are lots of neat, superficial little historical and sociological explanations of this odd flowering—many of them produced for public lectures by members of the intellectual community itself: intellectuals will of course try on any idea for size. None of them is, I think, to be trusted very far. We really haven't the faintest idea why this miracle occurred. But whatever the reason for it, it produced

something very different in the way of a literature than had been produced by the lonely giants of the nineteenth century.

When William James urged his brother Henry to stay in America and write about that wonderful product of democratic American society, The New Man, Henry went off to live in England and to write about its cultivated upperclass life, for reasons he made quite clear in his life of Hawthorne. The best he could do for William was to create the hero of *The American*, a fellow called Newman; Newman did not satisfy William at all. But Fitzgerald and Hemingway and Dos Passos and Cozzens and the rest could not have been persuaded not to write about The New Man and his society, though I doubt if William James would have been pleased by *their* vision of him either. They clearly felt what always seems to be felt by writers in periods of great imaginative activity; they seemed to themselves to have suddenly been released from some invisible restraint, to have been made free to discover and reveal the private truth about American experience. Even Sinclair Lewis clearly felt this, though his sense of the private truth of American experience was sentimental and crude. Lewis's strength was a Mencken-like feeling for the absurdity of the public and conventional American life of his time, of the world so admired by *Time Magazine*.

It was no doubt a dramatic and exciting time in America, the 20's, and that may have had something to do with the feelings of these young men. The shift of power from Europe to America that took place after the first world war was bound to excite any imagination capable of grasping it at all. As Fitzgerald put it in his characteristic way,

With Americans ordering suits by the gross in London, the Bond Street tailors perforce agreed to moderate their cut to the American long-waisted figure and loose-fitting taste, [and] something subtle passed to America, the style of man.

Moreover, it was a period that ran its course rapidly and excitingly. Fitzgerald said afterwards that it lasted almost exactly ten years, beginning with the May Day riots of 1919 "when the police rode down the demobilized country boys gaping at the orators in Madison Square" and leaping, as he put it, "to a spectacular death in October, 1929."

What it felt like to be living through the early days of that decade

is most beautifully realized in one of the finest of Fitzgerald's early stories, "May Day." Of the so-called "May Day riots" described with such wonderful irony in that story, Fitzgerald said elsewhere that "we didn't remember anything about the Bill of Rights until Mencken began plugging it, but we did know that such tyranny belonged in the jittery little countries of south Europe. If goose-livered business men had this effect on the government, then maybe we had gone to war for J. P. Morgan's loans after all."

This feeling made two courses possible, and they were both followed in the period. These young people with their optimistic belief that the good life was possible in this new and powerful America could either fight to make America what they thought it ought to be or they could—and it was easy in a wealthy period—retire into a small world of their own where they might live as they pleased and let the booboisie go its own benighted way. There were people like Walter Lippmann and Heywood Broun—and, in part, Mencken—who followed the first course, but the majority—"tired," as Fitzgerald said, "of Great Causes" and alienated by the kind of small-town pettiness that could imagine Prohibition a Great Cause—followed the second course. Mencken is such a key figure for the period because he did both, and did so with a kind of gross and ebullient wit that makes him peculiarly appealing to Americans.

He liked to say, when asked to lecture to Women's Clubs, "I am seldom out of Baltimore, and when I am, I am never out of my cups." When he was confronted by that favorite witticism of the stupid, if you do not like America why do you live in it, he would say, "Why do men go to zoos?" This was the way intelligent young people, staring confidently out from the privacy of their little world, saw the absurd public and ordinary life of America.

They did so with very considerable political courage and honesty. The fact that they were libertarians interested in private freedom rather than in public equality as liberals are, and that they hardly participated in organized political movements until the Sacco-Vanzetti case in 1927, ought not to blind us to their impertinent defiance of the ruling powers. Mencken was a master of such impertinence, calling the president of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, "the heir of Washington, Lincoln, and Chester A. Arthur," and describing the average well-behaved 101% Rotarian business man as some one

"who goes to bed every night with an uneasy feeling that there is a burglar under the bed, and gets up every morning with a sickening fear that his underwear has been stolen."

When William Jennings Bryan—the idol of those Americans who disapproved of all new ideas, including the one Bryan fought so energetically at the Scopes trial, namely, evolution—when Bryan died, Mencken wrote an obituary of him for the *Baltimore Sun* that begins, "Has it been duly marked by historians that the late William Jennings Bryan's last secular act on this globe of sin was to catch flies?" and goes on to observe of Bryan that "For forty years he tracked [*Homo neandertalensis*] with coo and bellow, up and down the rustic backways of the Republic. Whenever the flambeaux of Chatauqua smoked and guttered, and the bilge of idealism ran in the veins, . . . and men gathered who were weary and heavy laden and their wives who were full of Peruna and as fecund as shad—there the indefatigable Jennings set up his traps and spread his bait. He knew every country town in the South and West, and he could crowd the most remote of them to suffocation by simply winding his horn." Thus Mencken talked about Calvin Coolidge, the President of the United States, and Bryan, its dignified ex-secretary of State. If you will try to imagine anyone talking today in this way about President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles you will have some measure of Mencken's political impertinence and courage.

He talked the same way about issues. In the midst of the Palmer Red Raids, one of those periodic displays of childish hysteria about communism that we Americans regularly disgrace ourselves with, Mencken wrote,

Let a lone Red arise to annoy a barroom full of Michigan lumberjacks, and at once the fire-alarm sounds and the full military and naval power of the nation is summoned to put down the outrage. But how many Americans would the Reds convert to their rubbish, even supposing them free to spout it on every street corner? Probably not enough, all told, to make a day's hunting for a regiment of militia. The American moron's mind simply doesn't run in that direction; he wants to keep his Ford even at the cost of losing the Bill of Rights.

There is a gift here, amounting almost to a kind of genius, for insulting all the conceivable sacred cows of American society at once. But behind Mencken's delight in stirring up the animals there is a serious

attitude that was common to the intelligent young people of his time. It is made up of a love of personal freedom and a respect for the rights of individuals, however wrong one may think them, of a dislike of doctrinaire egalitarianism and a respect for superior intelligence and talent, however annoying it may be, of a dislike of the complacent vulgarity of the majority and the politicians and advertisers who pander to and encourage it and a respect for intellectual dissatisfaction and the artists who represent it.

This, then, was the way the public world looked to the cultivated young people of the American 20's. Most of them, in the early twenties at least, saw little hope of changing it and felt little impulse to try, though more of them became interested in politics toward the end of the period. Most of them stayed inside their little underground community and there tried and—alas, because it was in many ways an admirably conceived ambition—failed to live the good life. Occasionally—Fitzgerald was a great one for this kind of thing—they made a serio-comic foray into the world of conventional behavior and newspapers in order to say boo to the Babbitts, but mostly they stayed within their own world. Looking back at it afterwards, Zelda Fitzgerald said with her sharp insight and her slightly schizoid wit,

"We're having some people," everybody said to everybody else, "and we want you to join us," and they said, "We'll telephone."

All over New York people telephoned. They telephoned from one hotel to another to people on other parties that they couldn't get there—that they were engaged. It was always teatime or late at night.

And Fitzgerald himself said,

It was borrowed time anyhow—the whole upper tenth of a nation living with the insouciance of grand ducs and the casualness of chorus girls. But moralizing is easy now and it was pleasant to be in one's twenties in such a certain and unworried time. . . . Sometimes . . . there is a ghostly rumble among the drums, an asthmatic whisper in the trombones that swings me back into the early twenties when we drank wood alcohol and every day in every way grew better and better, and there was a first abortive shortening of the skirts, and girls all looked alike in sweater dresses, and people you didn't want to know said "Yes, we have no bananas," and it seemed only a question of a few years before the

older people would step aside and let the world be run by those who saw things as they were — and it all seemed rosy and romantic to us who were young then, because we will never feel quite so intensely about our surroundings any more.

Keatsian romantic that he was, Fitzgerald could never deny the kind of truth that intensity gave, and that is why, of all this brilliant group of writers in the twenties who were bent on showing — in Hemingway's phrase — exactly "the way it was" in that time of hope and promise, Fitzgerald was most acutely aware of the way it was.

All these writers were romantics of one kind or another, as perhaps all Americans must be, but Fitzgerald was by temperament the special kind of romantic that Keats also was, and he therefore felt with special poignancy, just as Keats did, the irony of time. He lived, as Malcolm Cowley once put it, in a room full of clocks and calendars. Small wonder that he borrowed a phrase from Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" for the title of the novel in which he described with loving hindsight the 20's defeated romantic dream of the good life, and called the book *Tender Is the Night*. Or that the most brilliant passage he ever wrote about American experience — the final paragraphs of *The Great Gatsby* — deals with the romantic dilemma in exactly the same terms, and in almost as complex a figure, as do the famous opening lines of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

Precisely because he so loved the products of time in all their mortal and evanescent glory, Fitzgerald longed to have them last forever, unchanged, just as Keats longed to believe that he could remain "awake for ever in a sweet unrest" "Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast." Both knew that they could not, that even the *foster-child* of silence and slow time, the Grecian urn that was not even truly eternal, achieved its merely relative permanence at the cost of being incapable of the very thing they wished to make permanent, what Keats called "the wild ecstasy," the passion and intensity of a realized love.

This dilemma is familiar enough in western culture. It was by no means a recent poet, even as the history of literature goes, who remarked that

When I have seen by time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age . . .
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare —
That time will come and take my love away.

Fitzgerald's wry, twentieth-century version of this feeling was: "It grows harder to write, because there is much less weather than when I was a boy and practically no men and women at all."

But the remarkable thing about Fitzgerald is that he was not a historian, even of ideas; he was a poet, a man who experienced this idea, felt it anew and as if no one had ever experienced it before, and felt it therefore wholly in terms of the world *he* lived in. By doing so, he displayed, unintentionally, and as the result of an accident that made his experience representative, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the American sensibility, one of the attitudes that does make us new men in western culture, if a very different kind of new men from those William James thought he saw. Do we not feel that one of the characteristic polarities of the American consciousness is that between an intense idealism, an extravagant vision of the good life, and a passion for the actual and concrete? Men with a passion for the actual and concrete are usually willing to settle for limited goods that can be realized here and now; politics, they say, is the art of the possible. Idealists are likely to put the realization of their ideals into the remote future, when the state will wither away, etc., in order not to have to face the impossibility of realizing them here and now. But the American imagination seems to combine a powerful idealism with a passion for the actual, and, indeed, the peculiarly American actual. It is this insistence on having both the dream and its realization that makes Jay Gatsby's life tragic, and no less so because he is innocently unaware of how much he is asking for. It is also what made Scott Fitzgerald's life tragic. It is, indeed, the source of tragedy for American life in general.

There is a wonderful intuitive grasp of this fact about us in Fitzgerald's making his most important hero a man of provincial American origin, an almost Horatio-Alger young man from a Middlewestern farm named James Gatz, who has what Fitzgerald calls "a heightened sensitivity to the promises of life" and is determined to the point of dying for it to realize these promises in an actual marriage with the novel's heroine, Daisy Fay. Neither the realities of time nor the contingencies of human character discourage him. When he discovers that in the five years since he has last seen Daisy Fay she has married and had a child, Gatsby decides that he will take her back to Louisville to the place—and the time, he

obviously believes—where they had left off, and that they will start their life over again from there. “I wouldn’t ask too much of her,” Fitzgerald’s narrator says to him. “You can’t repeat the past.” “Can’t repeat the past?” Gatsby cries incredulously, “Why, of course you can!” And when he is finally driven to admit that Daisy may have loved her husband, as he says, “just for a minute, when they were first married”—an enormous concession for him—he immediately adds, “In any case, it was just personal.”

Like the hero he imagined as the embodiment of the romantic’s “heightened sensitivity to the promises of life,” the world he imagined those promises conceived in and defeated by is the world he—and all of us—actually experience them in. Fitzgerald understood the essential act of Keats’s imagination so well precisely because he had experienced it independently, not in the world of nightingales, of “green hills in an April shroud,” of “globèd peonies,” but in a world where the full glory of nature is known as Nick Carraway knows it in *The Great Gatsby* when he suddenly becomes conscious that “it was deep summer on roadhouse roofs and in front of wayside garages, where new red gas pumps sat out in pools of light.” If Wordsworth, looking once again, after five years absence, at the countryside a few miles above Tintern Abbey will say with intense excitement that once again he sees “these pastoral farms, / Green to the very door,” Nick Carraway will know the same feeling of excitement by contemplating a Long Island estate where “the lawn started at the beach and ran toward the front door for a quarter of a mile, jumping over sun-dials and brick walks and burning gardens—finally when it reached the house drifting up the side in bright vines as though from the momentum of its run.”

No wonder Fitzgerald understood—indeed, had felt himself—what Gatsby feels about Daisy Fay’s house in Louisville, that

There was a ripe mystery about it, a hint of bedrooms upstairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors, and of romances that were not musty and laid away already in lavender but fresh and breathing and redolent of this year’s shining motor cars and of dances whose flowers were scarcely withered.

This was a luxurious house, because Daisy Fay’s family was wealthy. This fact is crucial to an understanding of Fitzgerald and of the twenties he represented, and I want in conclusion to examine it and

even to argue that the attitude Fitzgerald and the twenties took toward wealth is a more honest one than we allow ourselves today and perhaps the only one that will justify the life of the richest country in the world, insofar as that country lives up to any ideal and can be justified at all.

The first thing that has to be recognized is that, though Fitzgerald's imagination was much preoccupied by wealth, he was almost completely uninterested in it for its own sake, just as he was deeply scornful of rich people who were merely rich, feeling about them, as he said, "not the conviction of a revolutionist [that makes one think he can improve things] but the smouldering hatred of a peasant [that assures one he cannot]." Beautiful as Daisy Fay was, most things about her were faintly disappointing to Gatsby when he met her again after dreaming about her for nearly five years, for almost "no amount of fire and freshness," as Fitzgerald puts it, "can challenge what a man can store up in his ghostly heart." The only thing about Daisy that does not thus slightly fail Gatsby is her voice with its "inexhaustible charm," a charm that has been cultivated, refined, and preserved by the conditions of her whole life, the circumstances that have surrounded her because she has lived always in the luxurious world of wealth. "Her voice," says Gatsby suddenly, like a man blurting out the unmentionable secret of all our lives, "is full of money." The money means nothing in itself; the last thing Gatsby loves is money. What he loves is the full realization of the natural beauty of Daisy's voice and — as he mistakenly believes — of all the rest of her nature that has been made possible by wealth.

This is what Fitzgerald's imagination grasped about American life, that wealth is enormously important to it because as American society is constituted — just possibly as any society is constituted — only wealth provides the conditions that make the full realization of life's promises possible, and that a preoccupation with material possessions is justified only when those possessions are used for the realization of the finest life an imagination of heightened sensitivity can conceive. This is almost exactly the inverse of George Orwell's lifelong argument that the essential virtues are simply not possible in a life of grinding poverty, and there is perhaps something characteristic in the fact that Eton's great secular moralist dwelt characteristically on the evils of poverty and Princeton's on the promises of wealth.

We Americans seem to suffer under a peculiar tabu about wealth. By some kind of conspiracy of silence, we work together to persuade ourselves that we think what we call "beautiful *homes*"—perhaps because they are so often only houses—clubs, schools, universities, cars, clothes, all of which, heaven knows, cost a great deal of money, are nice enough but not necessary to our virtue and happiness. Almost pathetically, for a business civilization, we even cling to the pretense that wealth is not the foundation of social position. Fitzgerald's imagination was somehow freed from this tabu; he recognized clearly, and did not even know he was not supposed to say, that the rich are different from you and me—and luckier in the possibilities of their lives. Thus he was able to perceive without confusion all there was to know about the subtle and complex structure of sentiment and attitude we build up almost from birth around objects and activities that are conspicuously expensive. He understood completely our feelings for cars, for resort hotels, for interior decoration and antiques, for what we ambiguously call "the best" colleges and universities. He can make us laugh in a very special way at his schoolboy hero, Basil Duke Lee, lounging—as he says—"passionately" behind the wheel of a Stutz Bearcat, because he knows that he is making us laugh at a secret passion of our own. There is a whole aspect of American culture to be defined in terms of our never-forgotten youthful feelings about a car, especially as that car is associated with social prestige and with our first experiences of love.

Fitzgerald's imagination, with its American impulse to fix on the concrete and actual, understood supremely well how close our feelings cling to the objects with which they were associated when they were most intense—to the cars, the clothes, the country-club or college dances, the popular tunes so expensively played on those occasions. He understood that we must face honestly the fact that the great good place we can imagine is a place that requires money for its existence.

He was not strikingly optimistic about the prospect of our not being damned by our materialism, of our dream's surviving its entanglement with particularly expensive objects. Who was ever so damned, finally, as Daisy Fay, whom Gatsby dreamed of as his golden princess high in a white tower? All the beautiful people of Fitzgerald's stories are damned in one way or another. But damned or

not, Fitzgerald's imagination told him, we live along the lines of that web of feelings we have woven around what he once called "the appurtenances of happiness," the expensive physical objects with which all our feelings are identified. Which one of us, if he is quite honest with himself, does not know that the sources of our secret emotional lives are in the unforgotten triumphs and griefs of our youth and that our dream of happiness is, however sophisticated, always a version of what Fitzgerald once described in a little ballad:

There'd be an orchestra
Bingo! Bango!
Playing for us
To dance the tango,
And people would clap
When we arose,
At her sweet face
And my new clothes.

Whether it is good or bad to be this kind of people — and I suppose it is both — we are indeed something like that. And it is Fitzgerald's true greatness as a writer that he helped his age — and therefore us — to see that this was "the way it was."

john "knocky" parker

Jazz and the 1920's

ALL THROUGH the decades since the twenties, America has tried to recapture that happy era when youth seemed endless, with spring-time forever and no tomorrow but just tonight — "If I Could Be with You One Hour Tonight," "Tonight You Belong to Me," "Save Your Sorrow for Tomorrow." Among the many things the world will never see again, however, is this rapturous freedom of the twenties. No matter how hard we try to recapture the spirit by reviving the songs, the dances, the costumes, the slogans, or the carefree exuberance of that never-never land that already seems so long ago and far away, we can't step in the same stream twice.

Even here in the sixties the stars of the twenties are still luminous with their imperishable glow: the indefatigable Mae West, the forever young Loretta, the Mills Brothers, Louis Armstrong, Astaire, Crosby, Wynn. Paul Whiteman and Jean Goldkette are still recording — albeit stereophonic — the same arrangements they made famous over three decades ago. Somehow, in the old songs played the same old way, we can still recapture something of the golden age, the jazz age, when it wasn't raining rain, you know, but raining violets.

One of the first attempts to revive the roaring twenties was as early as 1931, when, after the 1929 debacle, a song in George White's *Scandals* employed:

Life is just a bowl of cherries,
Don't take it serious;
Life's too mysterious.

The bereaved were comforted by a reminder of this world's transiency:

You work, you save, you worry so,
But you can't take your dough when you go — go — go — ¹

The song reviewed the fall of kings, Ozymandias, and added a suggestion of Emerson — "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind" — combined with the philosophy of Mehitabel — "Toujours gai, there's a dance in the old dame yet!"

So keep repeating, "It's the berries,"

The strongest oak must fall.

The sweet things in life to you were just loaned,

So how can you lose what you're never owned?

Life is just a bowl of cherries,

So live, and laugh at it all.²

This reversal of "Thanatopsis" failed to assuage the temper of the thirties, however, and the answer was in another song, "The Thrill Is Gone," from the same show. And in the next year themes such as "There is oh, such a hungry yearning burning inside of me"³ and "I've Got a Right to Sing the Blues" ushered in bleak houses and hard times.

In this essay, though, I should like to reconsider the development of jazz as an art form and to recall something of the background that went into making Chicago the capital of the twenties; to review some of the personalities and songs that made the decade memorable; to examine the fate of New Orleans Dixieland and the country blues when they became big business under the aegis of record, radio, and sheet music enterprises; and to see what happened to the musician when his Frankenstein brought him under its control.

The story of jazz music in the twenties began, perhaps, in 1917 with many New Orleans musicians leaving their city of a million dreams and looking for a home. In that year the Mayor of New Orleans, acting on order from the Secretary of the Navy, closed Storyville in the French Quarter; and the shift of the New Orleans jazzmen to the Windy City was the first step toward Parnassus. The war-time factories and big-city mills had already imported masses of workers from the country, and the revolt from the village was in full sway. All trains led to Chicago, and the Illinois Central carried its passengers in droves, either in the parlor cars and pullmans in the grand manner, or in the box cars and cattle cars in more indigent lounges. All headed for Chicago, that toddlin' town, where on

. . . State Street, that great street,

I just want to say, just want to say,

They do things they don't do on Broadway.⁴

And so, from 1917 to 1923 over five hundred thousand migrants settled in Chicago, south of the loop between the lake on the east and the cattle yards on the west. The song "How Ya Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm" certainly proved true, and service men coming home knew that they could lose their blues on

. . . State Street, that great street,

The street that Billy Sunday could not shut down.

As early as 1910 and 1911 such musicians as Freddy Keppard and Tony Jackson had already appeared in the big city for a series of limited engagements, and had remained as harbingers of happy times ahead. In 1913 the Chicago *Defender* called attention to the new art:

Have you heard Emanuel Perez's Creole Band? Have you heard that wonderful jazz music that the people of Chicago are wild about? ⁵

In 1918 King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band opened at the Royal Gardens, and the overture was over; the first brilliant scenes in the history of jazz were underway. The King was a pioneer, and he wrote back to his friend Buddie Petit:

If you've got a real good blues, have someone to write it just as your [sic] play them and send them to me, we can make some real jack on them. Now have the blues wrote down just as you can play them, it's the originality that counts. ⁶

The music was New Orleans, and under the influence of sterling musicians playing in the old familiar idiom, anyone sensitive to the logical sequence of the folksy form and arrangement could join right in the ensemble and follow right along.

When Lil Hardin, a young lady who had come up from Memphis to study, received a hurry-up call to join the Creole Jazz Band, she sat down to play, and asked for the music, only to be told that there was none. As to the key the piece was in, she was advised, "Never you mind. G'wan and hit it, gal." There was nothing to do but to hit it. ⁷

At King Oliver's Dreamland Cafe opening in 1920, Johnny Dodds, a New Orleans lad who had arrived in Chicago that same evening, appeared on the bandstand, unwrapped a clarinet from a long roll of newspaper, and at once established for all time the pattern for all successive clarinetists playing Dixieland solo or ensemble. Later on Johnny's little brother, Baby Dodds, joined the band on drums, and on the night of July 8, 1922, young Louis Armstrong landed at the

I. C. station downtown about eleven o'clock and went directly to join the great Oliver at the Lincoln Gardens. As Louie described his arrival:

When I was getting out of the cab and paying the driver, I could hear the King's band playing some kind of a real jump number. Believe me, they were really jumpin' in fine fashion. I hesitated about going inside right away, but finally I did.⁸

King Oliver was the leader of the first jazz hierarchy. He and Armstrong on cornets; Honore Dutrey, trombone; Johnny Dodds, clarinet; and a rocking rhythm section with Lil Hardin, piano; Bud Scott, banjo; Bill Johnson, bass; and Baby Dodds, drums, established the form for Dixieland groups for all time. Not even the other musicians themselves, though, could understand how, without any apparent cues at all, Joe and Louis could suddenly stand up and play elaborate harmonic breaks. Armstrong later explained,

. . . King and I stumbled upon a little something that no other trumpeters together ever thought of. While the band was just swinging, the king would lean over to me, moving his valves on his trumpet, make notes, the notes that he was going to make when the break would come. I'd listen and at the same time, I'd be figuring out my second to his lead. When the break would come, I'd have my part to blend right along with his. The crowd would go mad over it!⁹

Such a performance required a wonderful ear and a remarkable ability of improvisation.

The siren song of this new music caught the ear of many another wonderful musician who came under the hypnotic influence of these new songs from the delta. And so, just as there had been in New Orleans a second line of youngsters following the bands, anxious to learn, so too in Chicago young musicians watching avidly for new phrases and intonations were quick to absorb the harmonies and melodies of this new style. Before Oliver learned how to send tunes to Washington for protection, many songs in his repertoire were copyrighted under different names and even recorded by alert young Chicagoans who realized that what they heard could be a money-making proposition. As Jelly-Roll Morton put it, "Some blues is played; some is wrote; and some is just taken."¹⁰

The greatest influence on all the musicians, either then or now, was the great Jelly-Roll Morton, who at the advice of his good friend,

Tony Jackson, had appeared in Chicago in 1907 and again in 1914 and 1917 during tours. He returned in 1922 at a time when New Orleans jazz was flourishing everywhere. Everywhere he went, his tunes and ideas — played by Freddy Keppard, King Oliver, Doc Cooke, Jimmy Noone, Erskine Tate — were taking the town by storm. At the Melrose Brothers Music Store was a big banner hung out front, "Wolverine Blues sold here," and the time was right for Jelly-Roll to assert just how good he was and then to sit down and prove that he was right on every count. When Jelly walked into the Melrose music store, he took the first step in what was going to be, ultimately, the corporation control of jazz, with the composer and the artist turning over their tunes and talents to the magnates of the business world.

The Melrose Brothers are important names in the jazz of the twenties. They were two young men from Kentucky who had started a little music store right across from the Tivoli Movie Palace. Tipped off by Jessie Crawford as to what tunes were to be featured on the organ, they stocked up on the music, and their business was promising. Ted Lewis suggested that they establish tie-ups with the new Negro music on the South side, and they became the first major publishing house of the new jazz, blues, and stomps, with Jelly-Roll Morton, the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, and King Oliver as their outstanding stock in trade. After Melrose published the Morton tunes, Jelly-Roll became a big success; likewise, the Melrose Brothers moved from a dirty shop to palatial headquarters. Alan Lomax quotes Lester Melrose:

Listen, mister, Jelly-Roll wouldn't have been nothing if it hadn't been for Melrose. We made Jelly and we made all the rest of them. We made the blues. After all, we are here, and where are they? Nowhere. . . . I took my chances on some of the tunes I recorded being hits, and I wouldn't record anybody unless he signed all his rights in those tunes over to me.¹¹

The Melrose boys succeeded in the business world; Oliver and Morton and Leon Rappollo of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings died in extreme poverty. In 1937 King Oliver, stranded with a band in Savannah, with high blood pressure, pyorrhea, \$1.60 in a dimes saving bank, and a job working as janitor from nine a.m. to midnight, wrote his last letter to his sister,

Now my blood has started again and I am unable to take treatments

because it costs \$3.00 per treatment and I don't make enough money to continue my treatments. Now it begins to work on my heart. I am weak in my limbs at times and my breath but I can not asking you for any money or anything. A stitch in time save nine. Should anything happen to me will you want my body? ¹²

Back in 1921, just fifteen years earlier than King Oliver's letter to his sister, the *Chicago Defender* had reported,

King Oliver set Los Angeles on fire. He was offered all kinds of inducements to stay, and the highest salary ever offered anyone. All Los Angeles says he's the greatest, and some hot babies have been here the past year.¹³

The great Jelly-Roll Morton, penniless and friendless in the forties, was still outlining his plans to sue the Music Corporation of America and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers when he died in 1941. His last letters to his wife tell a sorry story:

I received the check from Melrose. \$52.00. I seen a lawyer. He advised me not to cash it, so I will institute a suit against them. I was depending on that to send you home. Now I will have to wait a little longer. Thanks for the prayers. . . .

. . . My breath has been very short like when I had to go to the hospital and have been spitting blood and many other symptoms too numerous to mention, but I am some better this morning.¹⁴

Make no mistake about it, though; Jelly was always the greatest of them all. Even Victor records billed him as the "Number One Hot Band." No other jazz musician ever displayed so much finesse and delicacy, so much elegance and grace. His compositions have a magnificent feeling for form. His piano background brought out the beat in all his performers. As Jelly himself said about his band, "Good, Hell, it's perfect." And back in the twenties, the Charleston boys and the red-hot mammas would stop for a moment, even in their wildest dissipation, to pay homage to genius whenever Mr. Jelly Lord would flash his diamond-studded tooth in a dazzling smile, and sing a paean to his prowess:

Oh, Mr. Jelly Lord,
He's the royal of that old keyboard,
Just a simple comer,
Now at home, as well as abroad,
Why, they call him Mr. Jelly Lord.¹⁵

The success of a musician — in the twenties as well as now — is dependent upon the success of the businessman. The musician creates

a product which the businessman, the public, the critics and reviewers, attempt to fit into their society. As the musician is led to adjust his work to the demand of the public, he compromises his art accordingly. The businessman obtains further concessions before the final product is thrown upon the open market. It is the responsibility of the sales manager to reconcile the music to the traditions of the society for which it was created, to guide the artist in his selection of style that might best fit a given time and place in order to receive maximum acceptance. The transmission of the form — disc or paper, and the physical attractiveness of the product — label, jacket, or cover, are all important factors. The manufacturer then is responsible for the tradition of the art, for its acceptance by the critics and reviewers, and for directing the demand of the public toward the object in view. Patronage dates back to ancient balladry, and payola is as old as Adam. There are questions about selection of record or sheet music company, about press relations and radio (now t.v.) and the right night club appearances, about the ballyhoo of reviews and criticisms, about fads which might boost sales, and about the problem of short-term or long-term values and sales survival. The encomiums accumulate after the musician has paid the supreme price, when it is no longer possible for him to create more work like the first. Only when his life has passed into a distorted legend can his work be appreciated in a universal sense and understood in historic perspective.

There is no doubt more truth than fiction in Lester Melrose's remark that Victor's manager threw him out of the office when he first proposed recording Jelly's jazz. Jelly-Roll, like so many other musicians, desperately needed management, and the Melrose brothers certainly managed him. They rated Joe Oliver, though, as the most important musician of the twenties because of his ability to meet the public deferentially. Too, both Melrose boys remarked about the difficulty of transcribing and arranging Jelly's music. No one knows now just exactly how much music Jelly knew; Elmer Schoebel and Mel Stitzel arranged the published orchestrations. Omer Simeon and Albert Nicholas have both remarked about the skeleton arrangements that the Red Hot Peppers worked out in the studio in collaboration, and the legend that survives suggests that Jelly knew little about writing, or for that matter, reading music.

Victor in Chicago, though, was only one of several recording com-

panies servicing the jazzmen of the midwest and southwest areas. Paramount Records was a subsidiary of the Wisconsin Chair Company at Grafton, some fifty miles north up Lake Michigan. The company sold home furnishings, and the directors thought that a record subsidiary would help sell their phonographs. They set up so-called "New York Laboratories" in Port Washington, Wisconsin, and rented Chicago studios on the second floor over a music store at Jackson and Wabash. Mayo Williams, a booking agent, acted as director of what was called "race" recordings and as the controlling force of Chicago Publishing Company, which printed the successful blues of the Paramount, Broadway, Gennett, Q. R. S., Banner, Regal, Argo, and Emerson record labels. As agent for both artists and recording companies, and as director of a publishing firm, Mayo Williams was an important person for blues singers to know.

There was a ready market for the Paramount blues records. The gangs of workers in Chicago and Detroit found full expression of their sentiments in the country blues sung by Blind Lemon Jefferson from Dallas, or Blind Blake from Jacksonville.

Blind Lemon Jefferson had been born blind in a small town, Wortham, Texas. Begging on the street with a guitar seemed the only profession open for a poor blind country boy, and Lemon had a real gift in his fingers. When he was twenty, he moved to Dallas and walked up and down the streets of deep Elm night and day, playing and singing the blues:

I stood on the corner; my feets were soaking wet,
I haven't seen anybody look like my baby yet.
I stood on the corner and almost bust my head,
I couldn't earn enough money to buy me a loaf of bread.¹⁶

Lemon was booked as a blind wrestler, and, since he weighed well over two hundred pounds, he survived the falls. There was no getting around it, though; he amused the public and lived on the small change tossed his way. Too, he learned all the work-songs, hymns, city and country blues that were offered by the streets and brothels of Dallas and Fort Worth.

Sometimes he would journey to Waxahachie or Corsicana to play and sing all night for a country brawl from eight to four a.m., and by the time he hit Chicago in 1925, he was ready for the big time. In four years he recorded eighty-one blues and became Paramount's outstanding artist. One advertisement in the Chicago *Defender* of his

records carried a picture of upreared snakes with a big shaky title, "That Black Snake Moan," and the description,

Heads up! Black snakes — weird, slimy, creepy — a wonderful subject for a wonderful Blues hit, and "Blind" Lemon Jefferson sure makes Blues history on this great Paramount record. You'll never quit playing this one when you hear that moan. Get it at your dealer's, or send us the coupon today. Be sure to ask for Paramount No. 12407.¹⁷

A coupon in the corner contained a listing of numbers with space for name and address and the directions,

Send no money! If your dealer is out of the records you want, send us the coupon below. Pay postman 75¢ for each record, plus small C.O.D. fee when he delivers records.¹⁸

These coupons poured into the home office by the thousands, and the pressings — 1600 a day — kept the Paramount machine busy from early morning until after dark. The joint was jumping. Sam Charters in his fine book, *The Country Blues*, says that after every session the company would have waiting for Blind Lemon a few dollars, a bottle, and a prostitute. The blues he sang, as well as the life he lived, were earthy and to the point:

Peach orchard Mama, you swore nobody'd pick your fruit but me,
I found three kid men shaking down your peaches free. . . .
One man bought your groceries,
Another joker paid your rent,
While I was working your orchard and giving you every cent.¹⁹

Lemon's last record, "Empty House Blues," was made in February, 1930. He left the studio saying that he was to sing at a house party, and walked out into the drifting snow. Stories were that he left a party too drunk to find his way and froze to death sitting in the gutter. Some said that he was waiting for his car and driver, but that they never found him.²⁰ His body was taken back to Wortham, Texas, and buried in an unmarked grave in a valley of Johnson grass and two gnarled oaks:

Oh, there's one kind favor I ask of you,
Yes, there's one kind favor I ask of you.
Just see that my grave is kept clean.²¹

Little has been written about one of the major contributions to jazz, the skiffle and string groups from as far southwest as El Paso and Houston to as far southeast as Nashville or Louisville. In the big

colored districts, remarkably raffish street bands would appear playing home-made or souped-up instruments such as a washtub bass, washboard drum, kazoo, comb, jug, mandolin, banjo, guitar, violin, harmonica, whistle, or even steel guitar with the broken neck of a bottle producing an eerie slide. Whereas young New Orleans musicians had cut their teeth on handed-down wind instruments, the Negro pawnshops in Memphis or Dallas made available to would-be street musicians inexpensive stringed instruments that had been a part of the western culture since the Spanish and Mexican ranchers. And so in Texas and Tennessee bands like the Light Crust Doughboys and the Memphis Jug Band were putting out wilder, hotter versions of "Bugle Call Rag" and ragtime-stomps than tame ensembles like the Benny Goodman group ever dreamed of. The young performers in the skiffle, string, and jug bands played with exuberant conviction and a sense of audience immediacy that the *Virtuosi di Roma* might envy, and right out in the middle of deep Elm or Beale Street some nights would be heard the most honest-to-goodness truly toe-tickling music since the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Columbia Records was one of the first major companies to invade the South with portable recording units, and the 14,000 series that resulted included a treasury of southwest swing as full-blooded and hot-bellied as anything the New Orleans or Chicago schools had every played. One of the records, "The Dallas Rag," by a hothouse Mozartian string quartet, the Dallas Jug Band (mandolin, banjo, guitar, jug), contained such superb articulation on the jug as to make the Budapest String quartet cellist envious of its dynamic tone.

The distinction between the city blues and the country blues sometimes blurs. The country blues artist is primarily self-taught, with an undisciplined approach to restrictions of time or tone. Mainly, he makes up his blues as he goes free-wheeling along. The city blues instrumentalists or vocalist will be more objective and will sing the required beats to the bar and intonate accuracies of pitch. The Bessie Smith who early in her recording career stopped singing and yelled out to the director, "Hold on a minute while I spit," was pretty country. The Bessie Smith, though, who sang "Alexander's Ragtime Band" on a later record date had become fairly citified. Her tutor, Ma Gertrude Rainey, retained the best of the country tradition, even

when she appeared with a well-rehearsed tightly-knit little band, her own Rabbit Foot Minstrels.

Ma was a strutter and a shouter. "Selling that Stuff" was one of her tunes and her main concern, and her art, either in person or on records, came through clearly and communicated to the listener oh boy and how. When Ma and her Rabbit Foot Minstrels pulled into Chattanooga, Tennessee, sometime before 1920, Bessie Smith joined the troop and became Ma's most famous protégé. Barnstorming through the gin mills, honky tonks, and bordellos of the South gave Bessie an apprenticeship that made her songs about her responsibilities, troubles, and frustrations the strong expression of a tough, robust woman who, though downhearted, could sing with conviction, "I've got the world in a jug and got the stopper in my hand."²² How powerful she was is told by Sy Oliver who, while working a stage show in Baltimore, heard Bessie tell the boys one day, "Watch me walk one today." During the show, she concentrated her performance of "Empty Bed Blues" on one man in the third row. Then, in the middle of the song, the man trance-like followed her up and across the stage and finally down the steps back to his seat from the opposite side.²³ Bessie had hypnotized her victim and, as she had said, had "walked" him at her will. Albert Nicholas says that on an early record date Bessie pointed to the microphone and told the engineer, "I don't need that little old thing." Bessie could sing over and drown out the loudest swing band going, and her voice had a vitality and a ring of sincerity unequalled by any other singer. Between 1923 and 1933 she sold ten million records. She could never understand, however, why her show "The Harlem Babies" was booked in Negro theatres on the south side while Ethel Waters appeared before large audiences in the loop and took the town by storm. Mrs. James P. Johnson, the wife of Bessie's favorite pianist, once remarked, "Bessie would come over to the house, but, mind you, she wasn't my friend. She was very rough."²⁴

Bessie's personality was like her singing—raw and pulsating, brutal and violent, vigorous and powerful. The very factors that made her an attractive, uninhibited singer made her unattractive socially. The same brashness that harmed Jelly proved to be Bessie's undoing. Other singers with production numbers and dramatic back-drop

played to greater success, and by 1933 she found herself down and out. The great Bessie who once received a thousand-dollar advance against a five per cent royalty for her recordings was eventually forced to give house rent parties in Harlem in order to pay for her room. Tragedy touched her closest associates, too. Big Charles Green, the instrumentalist on "Trombone Cholly" and "Empty Bed Blues" was found frozen to death on a Chicago doorstep; Joe Smith, the great cornetist in "Lost Your Head," "Baby Doll," and "Young Woman's Blues," died of tuberculosis in a mental asylum. Bessie herself was killed in an automobile accident near Clarksdale, Mississippi, in 1937. Louis Armstrong said of her,

She used to thrill me at all times, the way she could phrase a note with a certain something in her voice no other blues singer could get. She had music in her soul and felt everything she did. Her sincerity with her music was an inspiration.²⁵

Such country performers as Blind Lemon, Ma, and Bessie, brought jazz to the honky-tonks; the next step was the channeling of this power into small chamber orchestras and then into large bands from which chamber settings of trumpets, saxophones, or rhythm could be featured. The large orchestras helped to draw the attention of the commercial business interests to an art form that could be chained and exhibited for night club and hotel exploitation. With a personable front-man affably waving his baton, the rotogravure groups out front could enjoy an occasional sortie by a jazz member of the ensemble, provided of course that he was surrounded by musical clichés à la mode. Naturally the orchestras were commercial and played all the latest hits, dressing them up for a sophisticated clientele — I love my wife, but oh you kid! — and featuring each section in a stereotyped block format. A typical arrangement of the twenties would consist of the brass playing the straight lead with a few filigrees from a jazz soloist, then saxes and trumpets together playing the verse in harmony with just enough drum push-beats to break up the monotony, and then a little jazz by a couple of virtuosi backed with hot, full rhythm section — then a twenty-three-skidoo vocal with a few more toned-down ragtime fill-ins in the background, and at last the hottest soloist of all tooting tutti above the band full-chorded and hallelujah, the whole piece ending in a Charleston-coda on the cymbals. The arrangements, plus the threat of hostility from the leader when he

turned an evil eye on an offender, disciplined the band. The main emphasis was the melody, plus any gimmick that might help identify the group: rippling rhythm, wide-vibratto by the saxophones, bubble inundation, or — sometimes — an emphasis on very brief fill-ins by a number of jazz musicians buried in a debris brightened only when they occasionally forced their way to the surface for a fresh burst of air. These soloists were important, especially when they could be taught to keep their place, but it was a hard life. Some of them — like Bix Beiderbecke or Eddie Lang — could not read well and had to memorize the entire book, and retaining a complete repertoire took a great deal of memory work, but the boys who could read would always help those who couldn't, and somehow they all made out. The exacting ensembles and mechanical contrivances became, finally, more than any sensitive musician could give — or take — and the best (such as Beiderbecke or Lang) gave up the ghost and died, or, like Miniver Cheevy, kept on drinking and embalmed the old pieces in alcohol, still looking over the four-leaf clover that they'd overlooked before.

In the twenties song-writing also became a syndicated business. Radio turned commercial in 1922, and by 1924 coast-to-coast hook-ups were successfully established. Radio piracy of the wave length became so chaotic that the Federal Radio Commission was established to arbitrate the difficulties. Talking pictures quickly made the silent film obsolete, and the record manufacturers and song producers were quick to syndicate with radios and movies, and by the late twenties the music business had become a multi-million dollar affair illustrating the sorry saga of humanity on its downward march.

The songs themselves captured attention, too, from the news events of the day. The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922, for instance, helped to popularize further an interest in the far East which had been picking up momentum all through the century and which exploded full-blown in the literature and popular songs of the twenties. It was an English novelist, Edith M. Hull, a writer of novels hotter even than the asbestos Elinor "It" Glyn, who hit the jackpot with *The Sheik*, and who created in her title character a hero and a trade-mark that was to become in our time the symbol of an insatiable pleasure-ridden world. Rudolph Valentino in *The Sheik* and *The Son of the Sheik* catered to a palpitating audience which even

he was not titillating enough to satisfy, and he burned out quickly in 1926, leaving behind him a long long trail awindin' the likes of which we'll never see again.

Vaudeville got hold of a song celebrating the infamous Arabian amorist and inserted a one-line refrain, "without no pants on" between the already-formidable-enough statements in such a manner as to make even the "It" girl blush.

At night when he's asleep,
Into his tent I'll creep,
The stars that shine above
Will light our way to love — 26

is as plain a recital as one is apt to get, even in this age of nymphets and baby dolls. The impetuous sheik has indeed turned out to be an implacable hero-image.

Arabia though was only the beginning of a junket that was to tour extensively through the East in the Oriental Twenties. The titles themselves are enough to indicate the interest: "Borneo," "Chong — He Comes from Hong-Kong," "Chant of the Jungle," "Pagan Love Song," "Bound for Morocco," "Moonlight on the Ganges," "Down in Jungle Town," "Hula Lou," "On The Beach of Waikiki," "Yaka Hula Hickey Dula," "Underneath Hawaiian Skies," "So Long, Oo-Long, How Long You Gonna Be Gone," "Egyptian-ella," "Dardanella," "Palasteena," "Song of the Islands," "Oriental Fantasy," "In a Little Grass Shack at Kealakaua," "Abba Dabba Honeymoon," "Timbuctoo," "The Japanese Sandman," "On a Chinese Honeymoon," "China Boy," "Yellow Dog Blues," — how did that get in here? — "When Buddha Smiles," "Bagdad," "Mandalay," "Ukulele Lady," "Hello, Aloha, Tawaii," "The Desert Song," "Diga Diga Do," "Nagasaki," "Underneath the Russian Moon," "Kalua," "Wang Wang Blues." You name it.

The theory was to take a far-away name mentioned often in the papers — the Dardenelles of World War I — and to add a feminine suffix, and presto! — you'd have "Dardenella," "Egyptian-ella," "Palasteena." The songs told stories peculiarly American, reviewing the concerns of the day, such as *avouirdu pois*:

Ella was a dancing queen who started getting fat,
And every day found two pounds more on Ella — poor Ella —
Pretty soon she found she lost her job because of that,

And what was worse — she lost her fellow.
 And so she sailed to Egypt to forget,
 But ah! — she made a hit, and she's there yet.
 If you hear of a queen who can shim and shake
 Till she makes you think that you're in a quake,
 They're talking about — Egyptian-ella.²⁷

One song satirized the debutante for her dilettante accomplishments:

Lena was the Queen of Palasteena,
 How she used to play her concertina.
 She'd play it day and night,
 She'd never get it right,
 She'd play with all her might,
 And how they'd love it — want more uv it —
 I heard her play it once or twice,
 Oh, murder! Still it was nice.
 She was fat, but she got leaner
 Shovin' on her concertina,
 Lena from Palasteena way.²⁸

"Dardanella" was one of the earliest examples of boogie woogie, a continuous *basso ostinato* supplying a pseudo-Oriental atmosphere, and the treble consisting of an ascending chromatic scale returning by descending circuitous thirds. The lyric too combined eastern and western cultures; yet in spite of the setting, "We'll build a tent just like the gypsies of the Orient," the social mores remained singularly puritanical, "For there'll be one girl in my harem when you're mine."²⁹

Another subject which was popular with the songwriters was the South. The same audience that bought the records of Bessie Smith and Blind Lemon wanted to hear about their sunny southland:

Born where the waving corn
 Greet's you every morn from every side,
 And where a candid hand
 Makes you feel so grand and filled with pride,
 It's the Southland that I mean,
 Where the air is all serene . . .³⁰

In the twenties, moreover, trains were all bound south of the Mason-Dixon line: "Dreamy Alabama," "Carolina Sunshine," "On Miami Shore," "Swanee," "Dear Ole Southland," "My Sunny Tennessee," "Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes Waiting Down in Ten-Ten-Tennessee," "Tuck Me to Sleep in My Old Kentucky Home,"

"Wabash Blues," "Carolina in the Morning," "Georgia on My Mind," "Loving' Sam, the Sheik of Alabam'," "On the Alamo," "On the Gin-Gin-Ginny Shore," "On the Bam-Bam-Bammy Shore," "Rose of the Rio Grande," "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," "Charleston," "I'm Goin' South," "Louisville Lou, the Vampin' Lady," "Sadie Green, She's the Vamp of New Orleans," "My Galveston Gal," "Mexicali Rose," "Alabama Bound," "When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam'," "Headin' for Louisville," "Florida, the Moon, and You," "Hello, Swanee, Hello," "Away Down South in Heaven," "Mississippi Mud," "There's a Cradle in Caroline," "Caroline Moon," "Dusky Stevedore Down on the Swanee Shore," "Cryin' for the Carolines," "Lazy Louisiana Moon."

Sometimes these songs of the South — to prove literacy, perhaps — resorted to spelling: "M-i-crooked letter-crooked letter-i, crooked letter-crooked letter-i, humpback humpback-i, Mississippi, floating down to New Orleans,"³¹ "I'd give the world to be in D-i-x-i-even though my —"³² One song was even orthographic — "It's round in the ends and high in the middle, it's O-hi-o."³³

Another interesting motif recurrent in these songs of the South echoes the Grangers' antipathy to the railroad. The high price of tickets is the same theme that caused the Chattanooga choo-choo boarder of the forties to declare, "I've got my fare with just a trifle to spare," albeit enough for "dinner in the diner, ham and eggs in Carolina,"³⁴ One impetuous passanger, moreover, deplored the railroad schedule:

Oh, I just can't wait for the choo-choo train,
I'll hop aboard an aeroplane,
And I'll be in my Dixie home again
Tomorrow.³⁵

The "Two Tickets to Georgia" passenger of the thirties showed complacency in the conversation, "How much do I pay? O.K., G-a."³⁶ The traveller of the Midnight Choo-Choo in 1912 affirmed, "I'll be right there; I've got my fare."³⁷ The footworn Alabama passenger of 1925 referred to the belligerence of the railroad company in the line, "I'll give the meanest ticket man on earth all I'm worth to put my tootsies in an upper berth."³⁸ The comment "meanest ticket man" has ominous overtones indeed, and the phrase "all I'm worth" implies both that pullman tickets are awfully expensive, and that the traveller himself is not worth very much. "When the Midnight Choo

Choo Leaves for Alabam'" mentions "that rusty-haired conductor man" as if red-headed conductors were especially noxious, and continues infelicitously,

I'll grab him by the collar,
And I'll holler,
"Alabam'! Alabam'!"³⁹

The irate passenger headed Alabamaward is the ironic completion of the migration north fifteen years before, only the big noise from Illinois is drastically more foreboding.

As the gangster made his way South to continue the reconstruction, however, the southern lady was out to make far more destructive conquests.

The time was long past when the girl would plead with her paramour, a B-and-O brakeman who had thrown her down, that she would do the cooking, darling, she would pay the rent, she knew that she had done him wrong. In the twenties Alice had come out of the kitchen and had changed her role considerably. Mom had taken over new territories — see Philip Wylie — and she was out to prove not only equality but superiority as well, and man was at her mercy. Theda Bara of "Kiss me, my Fool" fame had suggested the pattern for the *femme fatale*, and the incendiary red-hot mamma and her cool, hard-hearted partner, Hannah, were worthy antagonists of man:

I saw her on the beach with a great big pan,
There was Hannah pouring water on a drowning man! . . .
An evening spent with Hannah sitting on your knees
Is like flying through Alaska in your B. V. D.'s!
Hard-hearted Hannah, the vamp of Savannah, G-a.⁴⁰

Georgia featured another scintillating siren, "Sweet Georgia Brown," on whom no gal made had got a shade, whose two lips sweet were hard to beat, and who made them all sigh and want to die —

I'll tell you just why,
And you know I won't lie — not much —
It's been said she knocks 'em dead
When she comes to town,
Since she came, why it's a shame
How she cools 'em down.
Fellows she can't get
Must be fellows she ain't met —
Georgia names 'em; Georgia claims 'em,
Sweet Georgia Brown.⁴¹

Feminine dominance of mankind, though especially strong in the South, flourished nationally. Rose of Washington Square, for example, who had been around a long time, had

. . . those Broadway vampires lashed to the mast,
She's got no future, but oh, what a past!⁴²

Sally, missing for some time from her alley, no less, had convinced her man pretty adequately before she took off. As he put it,

No matter what she is — wherever she may be,
If no one wants her now, please send her back to me.⁴³

Susie flatly wore her man out. He himself admitted,

We went riding; she didn't balk.
Back from Yonkers I'm the one who had to walk.⁴⁴

The sheet music of "If I Had You" back in 1928 bore the headline, "The Prince of Wales's favorite song," and contained the prophetic lines,

I could be a king, dear, uncrown'd,
Humble or poor, rich or renowned,
There is nothing I couldn't do if I had you.⁴⁵

One philosopher bewailed that wedding bells were breaking up that old gang of his, but the details of mankind's domesticity were listed more specifically elsewhere,

He's washing dishes and baby clothes,
He's so ambitious he even sews.
Have no regret, folks,
That's what you get, folks,
For makin' whoopee.⁴⁶

The courtier was really on the spot — "Aggravatin' papa, don't you try to two-time me. . . . I'll cut you down, and I don't mean maybe." One poor old guy had to see his mamma every night, or he couldn't see mamma at all. Another Hairbreadth Harry had to smile when his girl did, sigh when she did, and cry when she did, before he could be happy. In song after song, mankind was truly taken into tow:

She likes to bill and coo,
I never liked to bill and coo,
But she likes to bill and coo,
And that's my weakness now.⁴⁸

The heroine of the day was Little Coquette, a Hemingway-Fitzgerald type who, with a "certain little cute way of flirtin'," had her victim

under instantaneous control the instant he looked into "Them There Eyes."⁴⁹ Furthermore, she permeated his entire existence:

You're the cream in my coffee,
You're the salt in my stew,
You will always be my necessity,
I'd be lost without you.⁵⁰

And what finally happened to the indomitable ladies of the evening: Sadie Green, the vamp from New Orleans, Louisville Lou, Hard-Hearted Hannah, Black Eyed Susan Brown or her sister Georgia? One meets such a charmer in many of the songs of the 1930's or in any Hemingway tale, psychoanalyzing herself in a cabaret somewhere:

Night and day
Under the hide of me,
There's an oh-such-a-hungry yearning
Burning inside of me.⁵¹

Fungus had, evidently, caused introversion. For a more complete diagnosis of this dilemma, see Ring Lardner's brilliant *New Yorker* commentaries.

One of Duke Ellington's most famous blues of the thirties with lyrics by Andy Razaf reviewed the denouement of the twenties' belle a decade after her riotous fling:

They say, in your early life romance came,
And in this heart of yours burned a flame,
A flame that flickered one day, and died away,
And so, with disillusion deep in your eyes,
They say that fools in love soon grow wise,
The years have changed you somehow.
I see you now
Smoking, drinking, never thinking
Of tomorrow, so nonchalant,
Diamonds shining, dancing, dining
With some man in a restaurant.
Is that all you really want?
No Sophisticated Lady, I know
You miss a love you lost so long ago
That when nobody is nigh, you cry.⁵²

Obviously, jazz could sometimes contain several hidden meanings, and an enthusiastic coterie avidly defended the music. Paul White-man had said, "The difference between 'The Song of India' and 'The

Memphis Blues' is purely geographic." Transcending time and place, composers blatantly went about bringing the classics up to date. One writer, for instance, suggested that Schubert needed syncopation and pep, and offered to put the finishing touches to the unfinished symphony. Chopin, Beethoven, Rimsky-Korsakov all reappeared with lavish retouches, improved and modernized within an inch of their lives. There was no getting around it — the twenties had plenty of class, one way or another:

Edie was a lady,
Though her past was shady
Edie had class, with a capital-k.⁵³

The twenties were self-confident, if anything. Victor had Paul Whiteman; Brunswick had Red Nichols — each attempting to out-do the other with lavish, portentous twelve-inch records of some fragile vehicle that could barely bear the brunt of such an onslaught. Gershwin wrote classical stuff, and the high-class pianists played swanky jazz. Ostentation ran amuck.

As surely as this was certainly the end of ragtime, as the rags were defined by their creators, so too did this change herald the beginning of the end of jazz. Ragtime was introduced in the 1890's, but inside twenty years it had become a stylized way of playing and not simply separate compositions. Jazz had begun some twenty years later as a combination of ragtime and blues, and inside twenty years it too became a commercial style instead of a long series of songs. The great jazz classics were written in the early twenties when the form was first being established. The argument still goes on whether "Tishomingo Blues" and "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" are blues or popular songs, and whether "San" and "Stumbling" are ragtime songs, or, as the d.j.'s would say, "pops." Just as ragtime per se had disappeared into the ragtime song (e.g., "Maple Leaf Rag" to "Alexander's Ragtime Band"), so too did jazz disappear into the jazz-song until by the end of the twenties "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Honeysuckle Rose" (both show tunes) were about all being written that could be called at all jazz tunes.

Jazz was already dying by the end of the twenties. Its demise was postponed in the thirties by a group of musicians who had been the second-liners in Chicago in the twenties and who, by reviving Kansas City riffs and Southwest swing, helped usher in the swing age. Benny

Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Count Basie, Duke Wellington, Chick Webb, Woody Herman, the nucleus of the Ben Pollack band fronted by Bob Crosby, hammered out a swing format featuring excellent soloists in front of a pounding rhythm section, but the repertoire of even the swing bands was predominantly popular ballads and saccharine still-born popular tunes. Excellent musicians of the Bob Crosby band, for instance, were buried behind a vocal ensemble, the Bob-o-links, singing horrible material endlessly with only an occasional fill-in by Muggsy, Stacey, Fazola, Miller. Occasionally Tommy Dorsey would record "Copenhagen," "Milenburg Joys," or "Tin Roof Blues," but predominantly his band played sentimental syrup. The other bands had the same sorry history — over, out, and under. In the past twenty years, indeed, Bobby Haggart's "South Rampart Street Parade" remains about the only tune to join the standard repertoire along with the Oliver-Armstrong-Morton evergreens. One of my good friends remarked about the problem of recording unworthy material. "We just play what the man lets us, and try to make it sound as good as we can."

In the meantime the musician was doing his best with the material he had. The instrument itself, the microphones (at first electrical, then acoustical, now stereophonic), the acoustics of the hall, the whim of the producer — not to mention the inconsistencies of the audience, the heartlessness of the leader, or the scratched-up inaccurate manuscripts read under miserable lighting — all harried the poor performer trying to breathe life into some horrible old turkey. Some musicians such as James P. Johnson and J. Russell Robinson were forced by the exigencies of fate to depend upon their song royalties quite as much as their playing; some — Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller — depended more and more on clowning and salesmanship. Oh, Pagliacci. One tries with difficulty to recall a single unreconstructed jazz performer who died a financial success. Today, when you hear some itinerant honky-tonk pianist working over the keyboard, he isn't playing the blues; he's living them.

By the forties the swing bands had given up and were swaying over to commercial music before their expiration — see the record catalogues of the Goodman, Dorsey, Basie, Crosby big band output — and then the revival of jazz began. The Chicago youngsters had kept what they learned first-hand from the masters of the twenties

through the forties, but by the fifties there were too few to carry on ; and one by one, the giants of America's most original contribution to the arts have ignominiously passed away.

And now the revival is dying out. The new jazz bands starting out are comedians in fancy pants and ostentatious costumes, and the music they play is offal. The trombonist exaggerates smears and ludicrous tail-gate bass ; the clarinetist who used to tie together the front line in the great Dodds-Nicholas-Simeon tradition is now an ornate display of Goodman glibness, and the piano player plays funny tinkling ragweed ragtime. The subtle nuance of Baby Dodds' background on the drums has long since passed away. Nowadays if Dixieland charlatans know only two tunes — "When the Saints Go Marching In" and "Muskrat Ramble" — loud and fast and plenty funny, they're in the money as Ye Olde Time Fyre Fighters or Riverboat Roustabouts or some self-appointed Dixieland royalty. In the meantime back in New Orleans the Eureka Jazzband members are growing old, and the second line of youngsters following and watching and waiting is no longer in existence. Lemon, Bessie, the Jug Band, Jelly, the King — all are gone. The revival is waning. Jazz, that was originally according to its creators a combination of ragtime and the blues, is now entirely changed. Where is the ragtime ? Where is the blues ? What is now called progressive jazz or modern jazz retains practically nothing of either and is something else requiring another name. David Brubeck claims that his group plays European harmonies based on a jazz beat ; I don't know. The harmonies of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms are discernible in the works of Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll, and Clarence Williams. Back in the twenties, though, the classicists were displaced, and the clavichord became ill-tempered. It is true that behind the current caterwaul of progressive or retrogressive jazz you will find a good bassist or guitarist carrying the load of the band by playing the right chords. Go to any university today, however, and get some brash ivy-leaguers — either in or out of the music department ; it doesn't matter — and give them some horns. They need not play notes or tunes as long as they can play sounds loud and high and powerful ; and then put them in front of one, two, or three good rhythm men, and they are ready to play all requests and to meet all competition.

In the twenties the musicians sweated over their work. Today it is

uncouth to perspire, and the cats play a cool, teasing, detached, impersonal, formless collection of notes, not a pattern or a sequence. They're not knocking it out but are knocked out, not whipping it out but are whipped out, not beating it out but are beat out. And in the world of international tension, the beatniks, our hope for tomorrow, play their dreary melancholy pessimistic wail, the sick, sick music of the land of Oobledah. Oh, if only Buddy Bolden were here today; he'd tell them a thing or two:

I thought I heard Buddy Bolden shout,
"Open up that window,
Let that foul air out!"⁵⁴

Let us look briefly at the tunes the people are singing today. On the spring 1960 Phono-log listings of records in print are over forty lachrymose songs beginning with the word "cry"; "Cry, Cry, and Cry," "Cry, Angel," "Cry, Baby," "Cry, Baby, Cry," "Cry Baby Heart," "Cry Baby Polka," "Cry Baby Sigh Baby," "Cry, Cry, Baby," "Cry, Cry, Darling," "Crying Polka," "Crying Steel Guitar Waltz," "Cry of the Bat," "Cry Me a River." This lugubrious outlook has brainwashed a nation; the plague of sighing and grief threatens to make captives of us all.

The songs of the sixties express our ennui; the tunes of the twenties expressed a *joie d' vivre* in a musical style that flourished and swiftly faded away in the forties and fifties. Right now we are in a slough of despond; a new style may be born out of our present degradation. We don't know what's coming tomorrow; maybe the trouble and sorrow is a preliminary for a great day coming, but if it does, you can be sure that we will abandon our misery and return to the bouncy optimism of yesteryear — "Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better," "two cars in every garage," "a chicken in every pot," when everybody sang — "Singing in the Rain," "Singing in the Bathtub," "With a Song in My Heart." Who knows? Maybe once again we could bring back the red-red-robin is a-bob-bob-bobbin' along, and, sure enough, maybe make the whole world shine.

NOTES

¹ Lew Brown and Ray Henderson, "Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries" (New York: De Sylva, Brown, and Henderson, 1931).

² *Ibid.*

³ Cole Porter: "Night and Day" (New York, Harms, 1932).

- ⁴ Fred Fisher: "Chicago" (New York, Fred Fisher, 1922).
- ⁵ Chicago *Defender*, Nov. 14, 1913.
- ⁶ Cited in Frederic Ramsey Jr., and Charles Edward Smith, *Jazzmen* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1939).
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- ⁸ Cited in Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, eds., *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya* (New York: Rinehart, 1955), p. 163.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- ¹⁰ Al Rose
- ¹¹ Alan Lomax, *Mr. Jelly Lord* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1950), p. 186.
- ¹² Cited by Ramsey, Jr., and Smith, p. 90.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- ¹⁴ Cited by Alan Lomax, *op. cit.*, p. 250.
- ¹⁵ Jelly-Roll Morton, "Mr. Jelly Lord" (New York: Melrose Bros., 1923).
- ¹⁶ Blind Lemon Jefferson, "Long Lonesome Blues" (Paramount 12354, 1926).
- ¹⁷ Dec. 12, 1926.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Blind Lemon Jefferson, "Peach Orchard Mamma" (Paramount 12859).
- ²⁰ Sam Charters, *The Country Blues* (New York: Rinehart, 1959), pp. 66-72.
- ²¹ Blind Lemon Jefferson, "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" (Paramount 12608).
- ²² Bessie Smith, "Down Hearted Blues" (Columbia GL503).
- ²³ Jacket of Della Reese's "The Story of the Blues" (Jubilee 1095).
- ²⁴ Cited by Shapiro and Hentoff, p. 242.
- ²⁵ Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *The Jazz Makers* (New York: Rinehart, 1957), p. 140.
- ²⁶ Henry B. Smith, Francis Wheeler, and Ted Snyder, "The Shick of Araby" (New York: Waterson, Berlin, and Snyder, 1921).
- ²⁷ Walter Doyle, "Egyptian-ella" (New York: Leo Feist, 1930).
- ²⁸ Con Conrad and J. Russell Robinson, "Palastena" (New York: Shapiro, Bernstein, 1920).
- ²⁹ Fred Fisher, Felix Bernard, Johnny S. Black, "Dardanella" (New York: McCarthy and Fisher, 1919).
- ³⁰ J. Russell Robinson and Con Conrad, "Tomorrow" (New York: Waterson, Berlin, and Snyder, 1921).
- ³¹ Bert Hanlon, Benny Ryan, Harry Tierney, "M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i" (New York: Wm. Jerome, 1916; assigned 1916 to Leo Feist).
- ³² George Gershwin and Irving Caesar, "Swanee" (New York: Harms, 1919).
- ³³ Alfred Bryan and Bert Hanlon, "O-h-i-o" (New York: Jerome H. Remick, 1922).
- ³⁴ Mack Gordon and Harry Warren, "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" (New York: Leo Feist, 1941).
- ³⁵ Robinson and Conrad, *op. cit.*
- ³⁶ Joe Young, Charles Tobias, and J. Fred Coots, "Two Tickets to Georgia" (New York: Irving, Berlin, 1933).
- ³⁷ Irving Berlin, "When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam'" (New York: Waterson, Berlin, and Snyder, 1912).
- ³⁸ Bud De Sylva, Bud Green, Ray Henderson, "Alabamy Bound" (New York: Shapiro, Bernstein, 1925).
- ³⁹ Irving Berlin, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁰ Jack Yellen, Milton Ager, "Hard-Hearted Hannah" (New York: Ager, Yellen, and Bernstein, 1924).
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- ⁴² Ballard MacDonald and James F. Hanley, "Rose of Washington Square" (New York: Shapiro, Bernstein, 1920).
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⁴⁴ Bud G. DeSylva, "If You Knew Susie — Like I Know Susie" (New York: Shapiro, Bernstein, 1925).

⁴⁵ Ted Shapiro, Jimmy Campbell, Reginald Connelly, "If I Had You" (New York: Robbins, 1928).

⁴⁶ Gus Kahn, Walter Donaldson, "Makin' Whoopee!" (New York: Donaldson, Douglas, and Gumble, 1928).

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⁴⁸ Bud Green, Sam H. Stept, "That's My Weakness Now" (New York: Shapiro, Bernstein, 1928).

⁴⁹ Maceo Pinkard, William Tracey, Doris Tauber, "Them There Eyes" (New York: Irving Berlin, 1930).

⁵⁰ Bud G. De Sylva, Lew Brown, Ray Henderson, "You're the Cream in My Coffee" (New York: De Sylva, Brown, and Henderson, 1928).

⁵¹ Cole Porter, *op. cit.*

⁵² "Sophisticated Lady" (New York: Gotham Music, 1933).

⁵³ Bud G. De Sylva, Richard Whiting, Nacio Herb Brown, "Edie Was a Lady" (New York: Harms, 1932).

⁵⁴ Jelly-Roll Morton, "Buddy Bolden's Blues" (Washington, D.C.: Tempo Music, 1939).

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margaret c. kane

From the World in Quotation Marks

HANG UP the violins —
Scratching strings stretch sad songs
of cannibals munching morbidly
feeding starving egos.

Don't try to tune them —
Resisting repetition ranks high
in a sense-battered world
requiring restraint.

Stop flexing your muscles —
You've thrown us to the dogs
till terrified
only dry bones remain.

So quit bragging —
You can make nothing
out of dry bones.
You could have thought of that —
Before you set us up
on your infernal altars.

* * *

My Jerusalem gleams the salt,
While you with saltless tear
Plot a conflagration
Conspiring Sodom's sphere.

Seers with the world for a ball
Crying sacrifice, blood and all,
Light the pyre of this tortured wreck;
High priests ensconsed on a fear flight deck!

My Jerusalem gleams the Light
That will cup the dying ashes
From your striking degenerate fires,
My brilliance scorns such matches.

The Calf

Golden and fatted, the calf looms,
The idol that breaks the omnipotent tablets,
The feast that mends the prodigal pieces.

Golden distortion, shaped by hunger,
Appeasing appetites gluttonous;
Breaking the blazoned tablets
Bearded Moses held on Sinai's tops;
And the gluttons knelt to the golden calf,
And Moses smashed the commandments to smithereens.

As the story goes, a young man
Knelt to a golden calf with gluttonous appetite,
But finding his hunger painful, returned to the tablet-maker,
Who made him eat calf,
But this fatted and feast filled;
But then,
God is like that.

Devious Destination

Now Nicodemus —

sneaking around corners under the cover of darkness!

I take your hand in mine and give you my respects of the day;
At least you went looking, and you found Christ that way.

And the questions — always preoccupying the mind,
It takes patient wisdom to be the listening kind.

Inglorious, you come squeezing into the pages of the book,
But not so really, though it takes a second look
To see the illumination on the pages with your name,
For though you waited for the darkness, Christ waited till you came.

I Ache for the Laughing World

I ache for the laughing world

where being clever is no longer an avocation,
where there is no joy in the stilted acknowledgement
that you do have a right to make fun of somethings;

I do not laugh at the aching world

for underneath this dedication to frivolity
is a frightened child,
taking himself too seriously to be noble,
taking life too lightly to be anything less than a sham;

When the truth becomes so overwhelming, it must be
clothed by the jester;

Where the ache is no longer in the sides,

And the man sits idolizing the twist
like an agonized child gratified in being tickled.

Largess

THE TIME for my world
was hymned in the call of your cuckoo
poking its head out from the gilded clock,
the rich moment struck in mahogany throat,
grandfather, with the chime of your deep dollar.
Its calibrations hissed and whirred,
the stroboscopic strut of folding stuff
finding me wanting,
battering with my useless fists your door;
a crown on a skeleton, your family roof, though.
What earning could you let me grant you,
sniggering in the cigar-spotted dark
of hallway to the stand of lexicon,
that monument to your true paucity?
What moment's eloquence in the spittoon,
that urn for every cursed burial,
your dark humiliating metaphors to silence?
What "Thank you" for largess? What word?

Judgment

The rough edges of their shadows catch
each other in the linked background
of storm that swirls over the eyes of Paris,
peacock-beguiled, brain-washed, but fixed on flesh
like the sad-staring beast beneath his legs.
Small before the scene, you sweep them up
with tracing hand interpreting with love
and pleading Rubens' happiness in art,
his bride a buxom spirit brought to bed,
her captured breasts, monuments
to the dying young, to screaming old men
impotent before the veil
that cuts a teasing swathe around her sheath.

With awe you speak this man of guts and grace
and all his nuptials dancing arm in arm.
Elbow to elbow, his ruined mountains of clouds,
backdrops to those ladies' bright buttocks,
support the fury of the excluded guest,
an emanation of a tree that drives
her vengeance on into a firebrand
smoking in her hand, her other hand
having already bombed them with the apple.
Rococo stylizes all their faces,
you explain. What demon's secret did
he catch to paint their hearts, then, in explosion,
the gods themselves on trial before him,
in final consequence of his election
hate spicing the feast like hidden drums the frolic,
all shadows swinging to and from the light?
You do not really know.

Two milk-white sheep
chastely nibble the shepherd's scene away —
a pagan world digested by their awe

replaced now by our sabbath grass. The tree
outside my family window breathes blank wind,
its branches bobbing and bearing bleeding seeds,
cradling them — the lamb's sacraments,
all woods brought to ecclesiastic hush
stunning me with the intermittent stillness
wrought by bell and bell breaking up
the rebel pagan sound of his old flock
that your tones, expostulating, catch,
driving me to an artist's heresy,
flesh, helmet, and peacock — all in my head
the rough edges of their shadows clinging
and weaving me away another chime
that sounds this Sunday morning Paris' prize.

elizabeth greacen

Lament

YOUR LEGS are sexy,
I like your jokes
And respect your taste in ties.
Such a pearl;
Must you keep a death grip
On your parent oyster? —
Your old neighborhood,
Its small-shot politicians,
And the gang
In the corner candy store,
Grown older . . .

My dear, why is it you can't be
Detached from Jersey City?

I long for people
who know how to paint
(Not houses)
who like to converse
and who don't say ain't
unless they're kidding.

My love, I am most heartily
Mismatched with Jersey City.

Farewell at Pier 91

Go ahead, I blithely told you.
Europe is Europe.
And (Nobly)
"Why should two languish here
In mutual martyrdom
When one could go?"

Already in my mind
The grey Atlantic
Pitches its three thousand
Miles between us,
And the two months yawn,
An infinite abyss of boredom
Composed largely
Of Saturday nights.

Come down off that
Upper deck,
Where your eyes already
Yearn
Toward the open ocean
And other girls

I take it all back.

paul kendall

Optimist

I HAVE set devices for myself
Which one day may bring down
The skies I schemed to ride upon ;

But otherwise, time
Though it frets Popocatepetl to a pebble,
Will not easily tame

That fat wrinkle at my top,
Where myriads of undaunted fireflies
Will go on interfashioning acrostics of hope —

For no more reason, perhaps, than where,
In a dead Amusement Park, leaf-drowned lights
Still glimmer through broken palaces of pine
Because the last one out forgot to pull the switch —

Even when all the automatic elevators drop
And a fish fins itself, gills gulping, up the beach
And teetering on an incredulous spine,
Bays the moon I counted mine.

And Other Unmerited Ill

You'll spoil it, if you won't at least glance upward
On the Thursdays.
And avoid romping with the worm and pinching the lion and the
lamb,
And weeping in your own praise.

Remember . . . we agreed, after a falling-out a year or two ago,
That Thursday was no time
For derision or reckless expenditure or being slangy with the
neighbors
Or for telling nobodies our name.

On Thursdays we must inhabit every inch of our assumed selves
For a wary twenty-four hours.
No faltering into easy little happinesses or grinning
On dangerous curves.

Thursdays, we are blank-skinned and abdominal and public,
Nodding discreetly to hearses
And stocking our home shelter with a few extra cans
And differing in mature voices.

In the afternoon, receiving a few guests, we speak sparingly
Of astronomy, but with elegance.
This for Thursday, remember. On Thursday our sons are theoretical.
We pay pew-rents.

Then, if you are careful, Thursday will be followed by the Friday
When we let the children wrestle
In the shelter and we lightly dismiss implications of missing buttons,
Including your navel.

e. h. templin

To This We've Come

AT BEDTIME I male old maid householder
Tuck in doorways, I jerrymander
All things with locks. I set noises
To make more noise and hang up water
On a fire clothes-line. I slam a window —
A neighbor slams back, on flowers that ladder
Our houses.

To this we've come :
Dance, cobra-telephone,
On your cord-tail,
I pipe to you in
My sleep.

Outside fig-leaves turn up their palms
In helpless gesture : They catch star-laughter.
The mocking bird sings (with Dante) : "*Lasciate
Ogni . . . No dew shall enter here.*"

Abandoned Mexican Cemetery

Papayas, mangoes, hang obscenely. The gate is
Rusted shut. Munching a taco I follow the flow
Of flowers through a gap in the wall. A tethered
Goat browses, with pollen on its lips. Its udder
Is heavy as the enormous hum of insects. Head-markers
No longer even sawdust, therefore walk anywhere.
Be careful! Frightened turkey-chicks cheep under
The flowers. The graves are sunken, deflated.
Tropical clouds are pearls as huge as udders.
Maybe the dead are in the market where I
Just brushed my way through women's braids.

On the Desert

I'm gone, dear city mocking bird, you drop
Your match-head dung in vain. I sleep on
The desert, zipped in goose down. My sky
Runneth over with stars, not missiles.
The moon is so un-psychotically beautiful, so
Huge and dead, I get up and make a fire of
Rattlers. They burn pan-pallidly, the air
Is as cold and dry as the sand. I crawl
In again. Distant coyotes toot up their myth.

raymond roseliép

Ash Wednesday, Campus Chapel

I IN THE college chapel I go up
with our students to get my ashes,
kneel by the croppy boy who brushes
sleeves with mine as though willing to swap
coats or places: the common dirtfall
of palm on our heads he could not know
is heavy as sweat salt and the grown
man wrestling on the mat of my soul.

Together we drift to the doorway,
sharpen our breath on a suggestion
of flake. And I will never question
him about our inner rivalry,
or make even the barest mention
of the fallen snow and his hounding me.

Letter Received

Dear father, I am gliding away
from intangible loving and more
gently (a lover will guess) than I
had broken the umbilical cord.

When kneeling behind your rubric whirled
over grape in morning bravado,
I am easing away from your cold
espousal and terrible shadow.

Father forgive me, I am drifting
on the new potencies of manhood,
setting alarms that will some time ring
from the surf sound of blood in my side, . . .

headed for other billowing love
than your dark red grail of make-believe.

Night Piece

The night is tired. And you and I will move
through separate darknesses.

I almost hear
my wrist when I subtract from sleep to mark
the silly sheep that bound, clichéd and black;
none white.

My clock is mocking as I go
around a pasture where some flowers burn,
as a man's need; though I have loved since then
the daisy seed, I find only a little
of the light that pierces like a touch.

The moon is turned a tarnished metal on
a fence whose barbs I cannot reach but feel.
The sky is spent for one who leaves his lady
early. Shadows hug the walls I build.

Though light is not so active as the thoughts
a lover follows in his wakefulness,
for my surprise I'll catch at morning
and claim your eyes.

VISTA DEL SOL

PRETTY FAIR Saturday," Luther Cressey said when the last of the rental sleds had been checked in and the barnacles of snow removed. He spoke thoughtfully, scratching his ribs, as though some illusory master had asked him to sum up his day. "Can't complain."

"Maybe you can't," Blanche Cressey said. She was staring out at the orange snow plow, its red light blinking like some absurdly cumbersome animal. It had already attracted a crowd of teasing, gamboling children, who danced ahead daring the monster to gobble them up, their mouths open for the sputum of snow.

Her life was confusing, that was all. For two years they had been living it that way — Monday through Friday, a Palm Springs trailer court, Saturday and Sunday tending their store in the San Gorgonio mountains. Blanche watched her breath spread on the window pane, a moist, self-sustained cancer of restlessness.

The balcony rail outside had its meringue of snow and the chimney cap on the post office across the street with its white layer and black stipe was like some albino mushroom. Luther planted the toboggans that needed waxing on the studio couch, the sleek fat curve of the prows secured against the fringed welt, and then he began his solemn preparations for bed.

The snow sifted horizontally as if gravity had for a moment suspended itself to permit an exercise of will on the part of the flakes. It was a blue-grey twilight, the color of Blanche's hair that time she had the azure tint.

"Monday's our anniversary," Blanche said a little forlornly.

"How long is it this time?"

"Thirty-three years. Thirty-three." (He would forget anyway, but this time she was giving him a better than usual chance and when he

forgot, she would really make him pay.)

"A long long trail a-winding," Luther said, flopping over his pillow to get the benefit of the cool side. "Bet you didn't think when you was twenty that you'd be tending shop up here."

"I didn't think so at forty, or forty-five even," she said ominously.

In Palm Springs, Blanche told her trailer mates that weekends they went to their home in the San Gorgonio Mountains to keep an eye on their interests. "Have to keep a hand in," she would say jauntily. She hoped they would think of Cressey's Alpine Mart as one of those Palm Springs shops, fully carpeted clear through the powder room. She would have died if her Palm Springs bingo friends (the trailer park people called it Caramba, but it was bingo all the same) knew the truth, which was that they opened up weekends to get the ski crowd. The rest of the time there wasn't any business to speak of in the winter, and she did all the cooking and mopping up herself and waited on the sundries besides while Luther was out shoveling snow or propping up the shed where they kept the toboggans stored.

When she was in the mountains, on the other hand, and especially to the insolent adolescents with their nostrils moist like a souvenir of irresponsible childhood, Blanche pointed out that she and Luther liked the lark of spending part of their time in the trailer park — after all it was a comfortable one, with a heated swimming pool in the shape of a starfish (even if Mrs. Thompson, the park recreation director, did put in too much chlorine — it made the water bitter, but Luther said that was to counteract the effect of children swimming there). And she told them how she loved to shop in Palm Springs (in point of fact, they went to Cathedral City or Twentyninepalms for groceries).

It was true, when they had first come to Palm Springs and peered into the crowded shops with their cork and cactus earrings and their macaroni necklaces, she had tried to inveigle Luther into a purchase. "They'd go fine with my old shantung," she had said coquettishly. "If it's so old you better not be matching things to it," he had said. And in the end she had comforted herself by ridiculing the wares. "Looks like the elementary school's gone commercial," she taught herself to say whenever she met one of the macaroni and seashell creations.

But in the corner of her soul where she reckoned what was due her, Blanche added an abalone bracelet to her wedding ring with its

unfilled sockets for anniversary diamonds. She supposed someday when her obituary appeared saying Palm Springs, it would jolt the customers it had slipped her mind to tell, and they would reflect too late on how much they had paid for their staples (especially V-8 juice and frozen pies), if the proprietors lived in Palm Springs.

The Sunday volume was heavy and unsatisfactory—lots of small purchases and kids with ear muffs sticking their heads in the store to ask directions, adjusting the metal bands across the crown of their heads, as if they had earphones.

As usual Blanche spent all her time making watery cocoa for ungrateful skiers. She watched them fight the puckered skin of the hot chocolate away from their lips as though it was a spider web they had wandered into. She cooked endlessly, saltlessly, underfrying the breakfast bacon and hoping vaguely they would get trichinosis and linger helplessly with lots of expensive treatments. (Trichina, she said to herself as she impaled a raw bubble of fat on the tines of her probing fork.) But they never seemed to catch anything. They just went right on spearing snowballs shishkabob fashion onto the antennas of their cars, and swinging their mittened hands together inside, the snow melting in thoughtless puddles on the floor by the rack of pocketbooks, *Murder at the Frontier*, *Flaming Passion in the Jungle*. Murder all right, she thought as she mopped up.

By evening the store had a transparent fringe of icicles and the fissures of snow on the roofs widened until the white slabs slid with a frightening thud to earth. By the time the Cresseys were ready to go back to Palm Springs, the snow was off the pines enough so that the dried quills looked like grass skirts again and Luther announced they could get traction without chains.

"Auf wiedersehn," Blanche said as they were backing out. (Luther never seemed to understand that a kiss was supposed to be part of their departure ritual.)

"You turn down the heat?"

"Don't I always?" she said. "Auf wiedersehn," she tried again, but Luther had his head angled out the window as he backed up.

She remembered on the way that she had forgotten to pack the cord to his shaver. "This living two places is getting me down, I'm bushed," she said to avoid censure later when the omission was discovered.

"Thought you wanted to live in the desert," Luther said.

It was true. She had. They both had. Nothing too good for us, they had said with a sense of their just desserts when they had discovered that Palm Springs was really within reach. And she had immediately had informals printed, Mrs. Luther Cressey, #29, Vista del Sol, Palm Springs, California, all in a lovely sloping script that the stationer called Roman Medallion.

"You did too," she said a long time later.

She closed her eyes and permitted herself to doze a little when she was sure he didn't mean to reply. When Blanche opened her eyes again, they were in the desert. The Joshua trees, their bare limbs thrust out like coat racks, dotted the landscape, and the yucca, like yellow Thanksgiving candles, were set into their molds of earth on the hillsides. Little foreign cars with spoke wheels were spinning in and out of the canyons. "Moneybags," Blanche said. "Always in a hurry."

Whatever immediate cause she had for rancor had gained momentum, and it seemed to her at that moment—it was 8:20 when they pulled into their space at Vista del Sol—that what she needed more than anything was something that would fuse her life—the mountains and the desert, the sun and the cold, and especially her own labor and leisure, which instead of colliding with each other at the end of the day as other people's did, were separated by fifty miles and the weekend. She found herself standing outside both worlds like a child before a globe who knows that he lives somewhere amid the swirling pink continents and scored blue oceans. Blanche had never quite found the place that contained her. In the mountains she was an outpost for other people's recreation. In Palm Springs she was like a homesteader waiting to press a claim: someday her dominion would fan out from the trailer park to the prestige around her.

By the time the spastic hands of the clock over the Pullman sink had lurched with a click to 10:00 on Monday, the morning of her anniversary, it was clear to her that Luther had forgotten again and she would have to arrange her own set of treats. She gave him a kiss on his bald spot so that if he was suddenly to realize what day it was while she was gone, he would know why she had shown him this extra solicitude and suffer a multiple twinge of guilt.

She started her excursion by tramping along the gravel walk to the

morning program at the auditorium of the trailer park. Her feet made a familiar crunch on the stones. She couldn't remember whether today was the astrologist or folk songs or open-heart surgery or what. The management of the park was forever sending around questionnaires, to rate proposed events in order of preference. And she was forever erasing her numbers trying to be conscientious just as she was on the quizzes she was inescapably attracted to in magazines: "Do you get a lift out of the first glimpse of your husband in the evenings?" Did she? Every evening? "Do you build him up to your friends?" Hadn't she seen to it that the women at the pool knew he sluiced off the deck chairs? "Count your yes answers."

It was a fashion show. The commentator, her hat broad-brimmed, a nosegay of ribbon and flowers at one wrist, earrings glinting in the light, stood before the straight silver tulip of a microphone, disposing of the new spring resort collection, courtesy of Deidre's Desert Fashions, page by page, Ladies in Levis, Lanai Loungers. Blanche reached out her hand greedily as one of the models came down the ramp. The At Home Hostess. She squeezed the fabric between her thumb and third finger. "A shimmer of sequins forming the piece de resistance of this cocktail bathing suit . . ."

The suit had a pie-shaped slice . . . "ecru net, overlayed with red lace at the thigh to give a provocative illusion of flesh."

Maybe twenty years ago, Blanche said to herself with dignity, but not at fifty. She righted one of the hymnals which had been carelessly replaced in the row in front. That was one thing about a trailer park, even the triple A ones had to make things do for other things: the auditorium was the chapel come Sundays, and your patio was your neighbor's street, and the butane tank was a place for spreading hand washing and wet suits, and so forth.

"Remember, you'll find all these exciting new creations at Deidre's-on-the-Mall."

Blanche reflected on the way to the bus stop that she didn't see where people got that kind of money, twenty-five dollars for a cabaña robe with suede footprints up the back. She sat on the bench (courtesy of Fielder's Mortuary) and nibbled a phalanx of pastel mints that adhered sweetly to the corrugations on the roof of her mouth. She could imagine their soft colors combining there like a child's paints, wetted and mixed. She took the Downtown A bus to the beauty parlor

and waited for her favorite operator, the only one who seemed interested in the vicissitudes of her gall bladder. (In the trailer park she had to intersperse her narratives with polite hiatuses for rebuttal, and in the store she had to listen, it was the customers' money, their tongues and their tales.) Spices really started her attacks, she said as she watched the barber lopping lacquered caraculs of black hair from a woman who pouted at him in the mirror. That and greasy things. It hurt clear up under her ribs when she got those spells.

As the helmet of the dryer was being lowered over her, rollers and net and tissue pads and all, she imagined she was being electrocuted. Only a matter of minutes, she had always heard. She felt for the switch that changed hot to medium and reached for Photoplay with her free hand.

"How about a manicure?"

She poked her head out from under its deafening sheath and pinched her eyebrows together to indicate she hadn't heard.

"Manicure?"

The hot impotent breath of the dryer fell on her shoulder blades. "Yes, I believe I will," Blanche said. The comb-out table had depressed her today. She had been forced to stare at herself with some fixity. Her eyes were heavy lidded and retracted so far into her head that it seemed they hoped some day to unite wisdom with retinal image. And her broken capillaries loomed like mercury in a thermometer that had gone berserk, branching and shooting off in all directions.

"Yes, I believe I will."

The operator massaged the loose skin of her lower arm with its transparent blotches as if she were an adder about to shed a feckless coat.

"What'll it be today, Potter's Pink? Or Nebuchadnezzar Red?"

"Red," Blanche said absently.

Once outside she stopped to accommodate her eyes to the light, wondering how that actress could possibly have lived with a man for five years and not known, *really* not known that he was carrying on with someone else.

An orange street sweeper, its brushes counter-rotating, its garnet eye winking, came clearly into view. Behind it, Blanche saw a young man in shirt sleeves standing in a display window, a mannequin slung

over his shoulder at about its bust line, its pink plastic legs thrust trustfully out behind. She looked away so as not to embarrass the young man with the female form draped about him, a nice clean-cut young man. When she looked back he was giving the dummy a twist of the head so that her wan beige smile was at a forty-five degree angle from the rest of her, which was in the red bathing suit. The suit with the slice of ecru lace from the fashion show. Deirdre's Desert Fashions. A pilot crew of children danced ahead of the sweeper, pacing it along the sidewalk. It looked for a second, with the glare, like the county snow plow in the mountains. And viewed this way the coincidence became for Blanche a manipulation of providence, a horoscope acted out for her like a charade.

She went in. "I'd like to try on the suit in the window."

"Which one, hon?" a woman in black said, her skirt caught to her in a drape at the pelvic bone, her brows tapered to an unerring lull at the temples.

"The red one. The one with the lace."

"Well, that only comes up to 18."

"That's all right," Blanche said. "I've worn 16½'s lots of times."

"Well good," the woman said, as if she was genuinely relieved. "That's our Lady Brett model and it's a love on. The dressing room is to the right and through the arch."

Blanche parted the curtain and deposited her pocket book on the hook where she could keep her eye on it. She had a vague sense of familiarity, of having been there before, until presently she remembered that the fitting room was like her walk-in closet in San Geronio with the flowered chintz covering.

She undressed furtively. Her corset with its smiling pink creases mocked her and she covered it carefully with her slip. *Please leave on your panties when trying on bathing suits. This is the law*, a sign (done in the same script as her informals) over the central mirror said.

The saleswoman reappeared. "Well, how're we doing?"

"All right, I guess," Blanche said. "I suppose I'm too old for this thing."

"You're as old as you feel, hon."

Blanche wanted to twist herself around for a look at the rear, but she was embarrassed. The saleswoman stroked the small of her back.

"Fits you to a T. Can you feel the support here?"

She hadn't thought of it exactly that way, support.

"I don't like those bows," she said.

"Oh, you could just snip them off. They're just tacked on." The saleslady cupped her hand over the bows seated tandem at the waist. It made Blanche's flesh crawl being touched that way, but she tried to study the effect earnestly.

"If you're sure you want it, I'll just cut them off for you."

Blanche didn't recall answering, but a moment later, she was watching the excision nervously. The saleslady stood frowning, scissors in hand, pin between her teeth like the proboscis of a carnivorous bug. "There, didn't leave a mark," she said as the second bow fluttered to the floor. Empty hangers tinkled their approval in the wake of a current from the fan above them.

"How about a foot ring to finish you off?"

"A what?"

"A foot ring. They're the latest thing. Hooks right over the big toe."

"I've seen those. No."

Outside she checked the wisdom of her purchase by another look at Lady Brett in the window. It *was* stunning and after all she had always wanted something the finest, and anyway she felt justified, it was not only her unheralded anniversary but the elastic was sprung in her old suit anyway, and she set off happily.

As soon as she got back to the park she reconnoitered the pool. Luther was there in one of the director's chairs, and next to him, Mrs. Thompson and her child, a frightfully skinny little thing with the ends of her hair broken, ruined from wearing it in a pony tail too long. The child, who had evidently just emerged from the pool, was thrusting her little finger in and out of her ear, like a plumber's snake, and shaking her head.

Back in the trailer Blanche unlooped the glossy aquamarine manufacturer's tag (Congratulations, you have just purchased a garment made of the finest yarns). With a frantic final tug downward of the suit about her thighs for decency, she was done.

She decided to step out in the full radiance of the Palm Springs sun and let them take in her suit (it would be hard to get off wet, it was tight already). Then, instead of backing into the pool as she customarily did, tensely gripping the cool metal escort of ladder, she

would thrust herself in, holding her nose if she had to, her head reappearing a moment later, majestically, triumphantly above the surface, like an undine.

The moment before she revealed herself was one of those pregnant with sensations—the numbers along the water line, three, six, deep, like the snow markers at the roadside in San Gorgonio, the oleanders swaying gently like dancers. As she stepped out from behind the rice plants she stubbed her toe on something (she looked back as she fell, but she was never sure precisely what the offending object was—the rung of the chair, a flaw in the cement, the lath of the foot disinfectant box?). “Oh God,” she heard Mrs. Thompson shout, but Blanche wasn’t sure whether she had said this before or after she stumbled.

“She’s got a bum ankle. Always has,” Luther said, dusting the dirt from her back. “What you trying to do—bust up housekeeping, mama?” And then she saw him take her in in a pursed-lip breath. “Ripped up your suit there. Here, take this till you get back to the trailer.” He handed her a white towel with a scarlet Vista del Sol at the hem. “Till you get decent,” he said.

She staggered back beyond the palms and rice plants, toward the path, dutifully holding the towel over her insert of lace. She *was* decent. It was the tan net. She had a good notion to go back and prove it to them. They were discussing what you did for sprains, heat or ice.

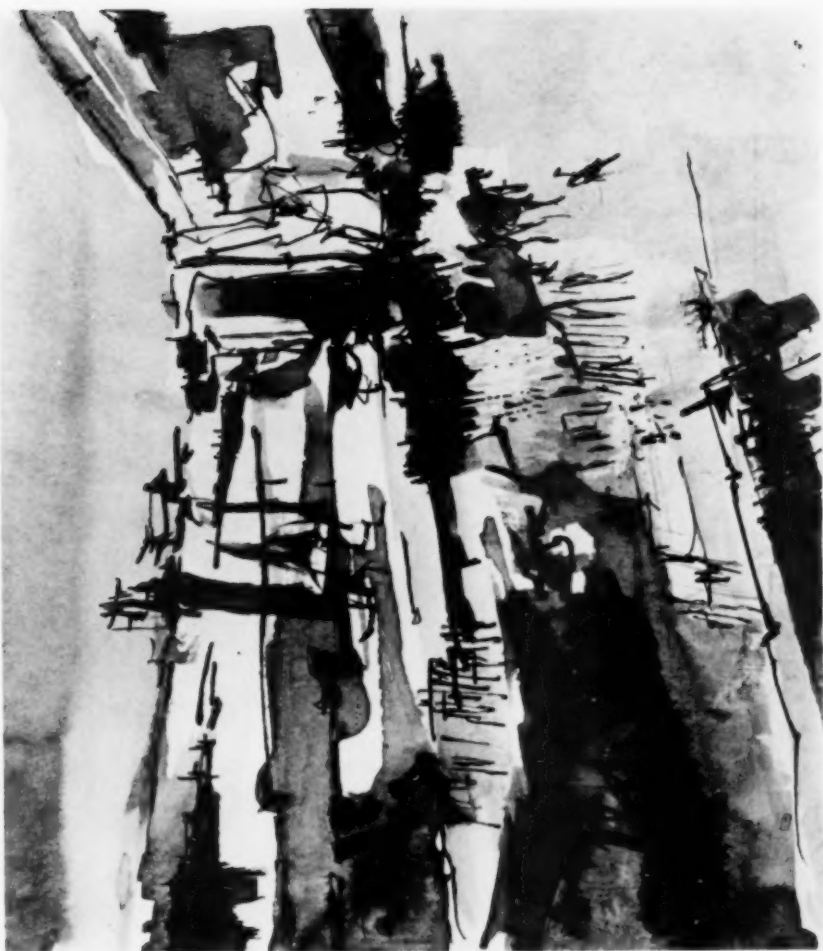
Instead of returning she hurried on, in through the door with the hole that let in flies. He thought it was flesh. The hot sting of her tears came when she began peeling off her suit, ignominiously dry.

WILLIS NELSON

THESE WASH drawings by Willis Nelson represent only one facet of his wide-ranging graphic talents and techniques. They are the first four of ten preliminary sketches done in 1960 for his oil painting *Point of Contact*. "They are," he says, "personal preparations for a more complete statement in paint, a 'skirmish' before the 'battle.' I have hundreds of these laying around. Sometimes I make thorough studies before I commence to paint and other times I work directly on the canvas without use of sketches." Mr. Nelson also works with line for its own sake and in various printmaking media, such as the work currently available in the rental gallery in Milwaukee.

At thirty-one, Mr. Nelson's exhibition record is extensive. It begins with a one-man show sponsored by the North Dakota Institute for Regional studies in Fargo in 1956 before he had had formal art instruction, continues with other one-, two-, three-, seven-, and fifteen-man shows through 1960, and includes such juried shows as those of the Walker Art Center Biennial in Minneapolis, 1958, at the Denver Museum, 1959, of the Wisconsin Printmakers' Exhibition, 1960, and at the Butler Institute of American Art, 1960. He has exhibited also in the invitational shows for Artists West of the Mississippi, at Colorado Springs, 1959, and at the Denver, 1960. He has garnered several prizes and awards, most recently (as of November, 1960) at the American Institute of Architects 46th Annual Exhibition of Wisconsin Art. In the first of a proposed annual publication called *Prize-Winning Oil Paintings*, 1960, he is one of forty-eight artists included, each with a full-color reproduction of a painting which won in an exhibition in 1959.

Mr. Nelson was born in Minot, North Dakota, in 1930, has degrees from Minot State Teachers' College and the University of North Dakota, and is at present a member of the Department of Fine Arts, Wisconsin State College at Platteville.









Wacht Am Rhein, 1960

The official line on Germany was, for some time, that Germany was a land of contrasts and paradoxes.

To quote A. J. P. Taylor's introduction to his classic of Germanophobia, *The Course of German History*:

The history of the Germans is a history of extremes. It contains everything except moderation and in the course of a thousand years the Germans have experienced everything except normality. They have dominated Europe and have been the helpless victims of the domination of others; they have enjoyed liberties unparalleled in Europe and they have fallen victims to despotisms without parallel; they have produced the most transcendental philosophers, the most spiritual musicians and the most ruthless and unscrupulous politicians.

. . . Only the normal person, not particularly good, not particularly bad, healthy, sane, moderate — he has never set his stamp on German history . . . One looks in vain for a *juste milieu*, for common sense . . . Nothing is normal in German history except violent oscillations.

My first night in Bonn I listened to the *Dreigroschenoper* with the daughter of a member of the old general staff, and it was no more than I expected. The Petersburg on the other side of the Rhine, where Chamberlain and Hitler played the prologue to World War II and the Allied High Commission played the epilogue, twinkled at us through the picture windows. We drank champagne and flicked our cigarettes into a silver ashtray inscribed "In recollection of the spring maneuvers of the 7th armored division, April 16, 1934."

My hostess, who was hearing *Dreigroschenoper* for the first time, thought it was fun and laughed at all the familiar anti-bourgeois lines. My host who had brought me, spoke enthusiastically about the *Wanderjahr* in the United States he'd just come home from. The other guest left the next day for a year in England. And I sat back, tense with delectation, and counted up the ironies on my fingers.

I unloaded the entire pile on my host on the way home. Of course, he insisted,

the hostess's daddy would not have enjoyed, perhaps not even endured, the *Dreigroschenoper*. Of course, he conceded, West Germany — as I would no doubt find out — was a curious place. But then he stopped talking, and we shuffled home through the leaves in silence. It seemed like a promising start.

As a matter of fact, I never again met anything quite like it.

Irony overtook me again only twice, and then it was far from the *jeunesse dorée* of suburban Bonn, and the impact was considerably more diffuse.

Once was with a friend in Düsseldorf who edits a union paper. Drinking his cognac and watching his television one night, relaxing comfortably after an eminently comfortable dinner, I pulled him unexpectedly into a squabble when I remarked I thought the "Internationale" was a second-rate song.

I was talking about music, but he wasn't, I discovered. He was talking about working class solidarity and the class struggle and he spoke with considerable feeling about the days when socialism meant socialism, and working class meant working class.

The next day we went downtown to shop for a washing machine and looked for *delicatessen* at one of the department stores. I certainly don't mean to say Dave Beck was masquerading as Rosa Luxemburg, or vice-versa. But there was no question, as there was no question at the ex-general's house, that Germany was a different place than it used to be.

I remembered, I can even imagine that he remembered, the Social Democratic party conference in Bad Godesberg the autumn before where the delegates strolled repeatedly past the iconography of a proud and bankrupt past on their way to the sessions where they forsook nationalization of industry, endorsed national defense, e.g., conscription of a new army, and announced ringingly that "Social democracy is not an ersatz religion."

"Welcome to the 20th century, Social Democrats," was my reaction. Betrayal, or at any rate, tragic irony was probably his. But as I say, he bought a very nice washing machine, and the displaced miners who came down to Bonn from the Ruhr to demonstrate one Saturday afternoon arrived on excursion steamers and spent the afternoon promenading on the Rhine bank.

My other experience with contrasts and paradoxes was the weekend I spent with a group of Young Social Democrats visiting an army base. This began the day after the Social Democrats' Herbert Wehner, a kind of German Aneurin Bevan, had thrown the Christian Democratic tacticians into temporary dismay by affirming the western alliance, military premises and all, in a debate in the *bundestag*.

The *bundeswehr* opened the public relations valve all the way but, perhaps because, there was obviously a lot of chariness on both sides. But what was remarkable was that the chariness was, so to speak, defensive, not aggressive, and what was defended might have warmed the heart of A. J. P. Taylor.

"We want to be, we must be, a democratic army," said the *bundeswehr*, "and we can't be a democratic army unless *everybody* will accept us."

"We want a democratic army and expect you to fulfill your democratic responsibility by training democratic soldiers," said the Social Democrats.

The next afternoon the Social Democrats and the soldiers ate icecream together on the terrace of a popular Rhineland honeymoon spot and the soldiers came around for a Social Democratic dance. It was something like meeting American Legionnaires at the monthly luncheon of the A.D.A.

I assume neither my hostess's daddy, nor the Düsseldorf unionist, nor possibly A. J. P. Taylor either, would have found this normal, but there it was — one might even say puckishly, "healthy, sane and moderate."

On the way home, past, as I enjoy repeating, Hitler and Chamberlain, the Allied High Commission, the place where the Social Democrats officially acclaimed sanity and Herbert Wehner preached it, one of the group grabbed me by the lapels and asked me what I *really* thought about Germany.

The question is no easier to answer now than it was then but the answer, perhaps *an* answer, should be clear by now: that Germany — meaning, of course, West Germany — is by American standards a pretty normal place. Whether this normality is a new departure in German history or the last paradoxical synthesis of Taylor's dialectic is perhaps academic.

The most interesting article I've seen on the subject is by Klaus Harpprecht, a commentator at the Westdeutscher Rundfunk in Cologne. Titled "The Lust for Normality," it appeared in a flossy West German monthly last spring as part of an issue — sold out within a week of publication — on the theme "Have the Germans Changed?"

"Germany," says Harpprecht, "has fulfilled its originality, adventure, and unhappiness quotas for a long time to come. Don't the Germans want to be anything special any more? This is ambiguous, and both meanings seem valid. The first is that they simply want to 'belong.' The second means that they've renounced upsetting the world and themselves with brilliant or infernal rebellions against the laws of common sense. . . . Not being 'special' means 'play it safe.'"

I think two more paragraphs are worth quoting.

"The deideologizing of German politics is not so much the result of deliberate political insight, as the product of a silent compulsion among a sobered electorate. To such an electorate . . . Adenauer proved the advantages of quiet ingenuity, mistrust of any exertion of the imagination not relevant to the immediate problem, determination in the assertion of several primary goals and at the same time, that shrewdness in daily affairs that always comes to the help of the conquered. . . . He is, so to speak, the generalization of the mediocre."

"The old man seduced the Germans to the realization that greatness doesn't begin with immoderation, he convinced them it was worth working for something moderate. They don't want all or nothing any more, but just a little bit, and a little bit more; in any case, what's attainable. . . . They understand that they're destined to be neither a great power nor a little one, but rather a middle-sized state. They're not going to retire into an idyll as they dreamed of doing in 1945, and as a militant super state they were definitely smashed. Germany is on the way to a middle-class society. It's becoming well-fed and shrewd, concerned with a careful administration of its potential and its successes. Will it be any more loveable? Perhaps not. But for itself and the world around it, it will certainly be more endurable."

I certainly don't mean to imply that 52 million West German *Candides* are irreversibly and imperturbably preoccupied with the cultivation of their garden, in this case a garden that grows more cars, refrigerators, and television sets. Nor I think does Harpprecht.

During my own stay in Bonn, the anti-Semitic wave of Christmas 1959 and the grand tour of William S. Schlamm, a quivering veteran of the McCarthyoid right, reverberated like hammer blows on an iron tub. I've also met Germans who were scared regularly by their defense minister Franz Josef Strauss, whose natural aptitude for militant indiscretion is undeniable.

But the anti-Semitism blew over in a few weeks, and it seems safe to say at the moment that Schlamm, who thinks he's Peter the Hermit and wants to lead a crusade against the east, has blown over too. Strauss of course isn't very likely to blow over in the foreseeable future, but even so is responsible by the nature of his position to the electorate, to his party, and to the western allies who ultimately control West Germany's defense.

The point, I think, is that as long as Berlin is balanced on a knife-edge, as long as 17 million Germans are behind the Iron Curtain, as long as 12 million West Germans can be ignited to passion for the lost homelands on the other side of the Oder and the Neisse, or for that matter, as long as any 10,000 citizens of any age and interest can be set aquiver by any atavistic voice that comes along, that West Germany will continue to be a place where a tin horn sounds to a lot of people like the golden trumpets of the apocalypse.

But while this might very well reveal that the New Normality is hollow in certain places, I don't think it denies that it exists, and while I think it qualifies Harpprecht's thesis, I don't think it denies it.

I think it should be fairly clear by now to anyone who's spent any time in West Germany since, say, 1955, that Harpprecht's sub-categories, so to speak, the urge to belong and the pursuit of the attainable, are a better index to what Germany is like than the old contrasts and paradoxes line.

The urge to belong is probably as conspicuous as any single aspect of contemporary German life. At the obvious political level, West Germany has been hip-deep in European integration movements since 1949 when it gained its independence, and Adenauer's policy, unlike De Gaulle's, still envisions political integration, not confederation, as the ultimate goal of the Common Market.

The eager-beaver Young European is a conspicuous and vocal part of the German scene and endless busloads of Germans visit the little Meccas of European unity, Paris, Brussels and Strasbourg.

Millions of German girls look like Brigitte Bardot and millions of German boys like Truman Capote. Germans dress like Italians and furnish their homes like Scandinavians, the publishers' catalogues are full of French and English titles, the language is saturated with anglicisms, the screen with French movies, the stage with Sartre and Tennessee Williams, the American Forces Network seems to come out of every radio, and German tourists line up respectfully in front of every monument from Westminster Abbey to the Parthenon.

German reviews of their own films make Time reviews look like producers' handouts, German literary critics pray regularly and predictably for the coming of the *German* novelist and the *German* playwright, German music critics wish their orchestras sounded like the Philadelphia.

None of this, I think, has a lot to do with how things really are, but rather with how people think they are. Is German culture bankrupt? Only, I would say, because it hasn't produced a Camus or an "Hiroshima, Mon Amour" but if these are the standards, it's obvious that it's not only the Germans who are running behind.

Yet the only German I met who stood up resolutely for postwar Germany's cultural output teaches Italian at the University of Bonn and is a leftwing socialist who likes to think of himself as the spiritual heir of Heine and Tucholsky. "It's not so bad," he said and started telling me about the Italians.

The pursuit of the attainable, if this means the pursuit of the tangible, is the other common denominator of West German life, in fact a kind of universal obsession. The transition from producing society to consuming society is nowhere more conspicuous than any Saturday morning in any West German department store, and the proliferation of consumer goods is almost embarrassing. I'm sure neither John Kenneth Galbraith nor Betty Furness has ever thought of a walnut-panelled, living room refrigerator, for example.

As elsewhere, the advertising business bloometh like the rose. The pitch is svelte elegance, super-power, and simple physical comfort. Before it gets to the movie it came for, every West German audience is enjoined for a quarter of an hour in a flurry of long black gloves, rich brown furs, round pink bottoms, English tweeds, broad shoulders, Clark Gable moustaches, sunlit kitchens, princely bathrooms, candle-lit bistros, and the Manhattan skyline, to buy beer,

cigarettes, water heaters, refrigerators, automobile tires, Coca Cola, fashions, furniture, package trips to Spain and even tickets on the German national railways.

"Manager" and "Teenager" are part of the language with sociological types and economic demands to match the concepts, and the West German work week for some time has been shorter than the Dutch and English.

Is this fun? Is this satisfying? Somehow these questions are hard to ask and might be impossible to answer.

God knows it's not very attractive. For a combination of parvenu tastelessness, social aggressiveness and sheer public bad manners, any German city could be a combination of Middletown and Macy's basement with a touch of the Indianapolis speedway. Consumption is conspicuous, consumption is galloping, and often you can't tell pursuit of the attainable from just plain, compulsive pursuit.

Well, have they changed? Despite the exoneration of ex-SS generals who shot German civilians in the spring of 1945, and the reappearance in the university towns of militant young punks *en couleur*, the answer is probably yes.

They've changed, and of course the world has changed.

Are they any more loveable, as Harpprecht asks? Probably not.

But as he says, I don't think there's any doubt they're a lot easier both on us and themselves.

REVIEWS

john wallace

Einstein in Alexandria

Lawrence Durrell. *Justine*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1957. \$3.75. *Balthazar*, 1958. \$3.75. *Mountolive*, 1959. \$3.95. *Clea*, 1960. \$3.95.

After waiting fifteen years for his Alexandria Quartet "to form up and get ready," Mr. Durrell finally "got the signal saying the bloody thing was there" and thereupon wrote these novels at phenomenal speed, crossing "inner resistances like you cross a shoal of transmitters when you are fiddling with the dial on a radio" (*The Paris Review*, Autumn-Winter 1960, pp. 41, 47). Mr. Durrell often appears to be broadcasting from several stations at once, for most of his characters talk much alike, but the metaphor also suggests that the variegated surface of his prose may conceal an even more personal concern than the one to which Mr. Durrell has confessed. Trying to read the novels in the light of his statement that "the central topic of the book [the quartet] is an investigation of modern love," one formulates immediate objections: there is no study of a conventional marriage; a good deal of the subject-matter is not related, or is related only indirectly, to love; and should not a long novel with pretensions of "investigating" modern love examine aspects of it, such as guilt, and anger, and recrimination, which are almost entirely absent from the quartet? A lengthy, and I hope for Mr. Durrell, a profitable, debate has raged about the merits of the quartet, and emphasis has fallen either on romantic elements in the work, or on what one critic has called Mr. Durrell's "pagan pluralism." I would not quarrel with these emphases, nor with the reviewers who have found the quartet sometimes overwritten and occasionally flat. There is no consistent differentiation of character and no unusually strong sense of the physical presence of things — people and Alexandria included. Numerous descriptive passages are extraordinarily good (a snow scene, a scene in Trafalgar Square, driving episodes, an arrival in London after a long absence, the whole symbolic action centered on the pool in *Clea*, etc.) but Mr. Durrell often relies too much on the catalogue of vision. Yet the four novels undoubtedly form an extremely clever, entertaining, and artistic whole (to be read first in the right order, and then in any order), and it is the unity I myself want to emphasize. Under its

pluralism, the quartet hides a thesis, and the theme which holds the parts together is not love, which merely constitutes the principal subject-matter, but the demand for knowledge. Enquiry becomes an end in itself, an obsession which failure can arrest but not cure.

One suspects that it was only late in Mr. Durrell's plans that it occurred to him to introduce the name and theory of Einstein, and to write a four-decker novel with three sides of space and one of time. Relativity translated into literary terms is indistinguishable from scepticism, and Mr. Durrell did not discover that few better ways exist of demonstrating the vanity of man's search for truth than to tell the same story from different perspectives; but the fourth side of his word-continuum, dipping into subsequent developments, must at least owe its existence to the scientific theory. *Clea* attempts to carry Mr. Durrell's enquiry a step beyond the boundaries of purely relative knowledge; it is a speculative fourth work after his three synoptic novels of unknowing. The burden of the first three parts is, as critics were quick to discern, that "relativity is absolute." The "facts" given in *Justine* are modified in successive books, so that few traces of the narrator's original opinions remain intact as true indications of reality. By the end we can attribute no permanent validity to any opinion which we, or the quartet's protagonists, may happen to hold. The unwritten siblings and sequels to the novel which Mr. Durrell has hinted could be written, would enlarge our comprehension by heaping up the "relative facts" still higher, but could get us no nearer the truth. "Truth is independent of fact. It does not mind being disproved. It is already dispossessed in utterance."

This is all obvious enough and the novels would soon pall were there not a desperate urgency to acquire the knowledge, which, when obtained, proves once more insufficient. As knowledge is the end of all effort, the physical contact of two lovers is irrelevant. They themselves are aware that they are not slaking their passion, but that passion is slaking their thoughts. Sensuality eases the pain of self-exploration, and the nymphomaniac Justine on her rounds is finding only outlets for her anguished curiosity. Sex, it is remarked, is but a way of introducing minds to one another, so "what good is a faithful body when the mind is by its very nature unfaithful"; or, as Clea writes, "it seems somehow necessary to find a human being to whom one can be faithful, not in the body (I leave that to the priests) but in the culprit mind." Mr. Durrell's comment to Mr. Kenneth Young (*Encounter*, Dec. 1959, p. 62) that in *Clea* he was "trying to develop the idea that the sexual act is our 'knowing' machine" seems to me more true of the earlier novels. The unreality of the physical experiences, which is often communicated, follows from their insignificance except as catalysts to reflection. Even a marriage of two minds is impossible, because each lover is bent on his or her own discoveries:

"Idle," she writes, "to imagine falling in love as a correspondence of minds, of thoughts; it is a simultaneous firing of two spirits engaged in the autonomous act of growing up. . . . The loved object is simply one that has shared an experience at the same moment of time, narcissistically; and the desire to be near the beloved object is at first not due to the idea of possessing it, but simply to let the two experiences compare themselves, like reflections in different mirrors."

The heedless promiscuity of most of the characters serves only to hasten their processes of self-knowledge. Lovers will freely admit that sympathy or affection is a better solvent for understanding, but they cannot break the habits of the old whore, Alexandria. Moreover, as long as the accumulation of knowledge appears to be the one means of personal fulfillment, any and every experience must be courted as often as possible. There is no knowing when the definitive fact may turn up, as indeed the crucial fact of Nessim's political conspiracy is revealed to British Intelligence quite fortuitously while Pursewarden is spending his one night in bed with Melissa. A friendly contempt for the body comes as strange in a writer so familiar with D. H. Lawrence's novels, but Mr. Durrell's characters are certain that it is the mind, not the emotions, in which they seek for the solutions of their loneliness. So, with the hope of surprising the truth about his own attitude to Justine, does Darley draw aside the curtain of the booth to expose Narouz buried in the flesh of a mountainous prostitute; and Narouz himself, at the moment he was spied upon, was thinking of Clea.

The game of "I spy," which we can observe in so casual a scene as that in which Darley watches Nessim watching Justine watching the chess-players, is the motif of the novels. A tape-recorder in a car, a stolen key, a night prowler, a telescope trained on the beach, blotting-paper writing deciphered in a mirror, a carnival with masks and with lovers searching for the hands of their beloved, a man peering in a driving mirror, conversations overheard: all belong to the spying pattern. We learn too that Justine's affairs with Darley and Pursewarden have been prompted, at least in part, by a desire to gain political information, and that the search for Justine's child, and for the identity of the man who raped her in childhood, has been going on for a long period of time. Neither is the search for knowledge confined to hunting for personal information. Balthazar and his friends (including several of the novel's major characters) meet regularly to explore the secrets of the Cabala, and, as a doctor, Balthazar is always first the medical researcher, not the general practitioner. Narouz discovers prophetic powers in himself and consults weird religious oracles. The Koran is recited at a "Wird" and the listeners sit spellbound at the revelation of the holy word. The quest for religious truth is but a minor variant of the main theme, and an elaboration of the "intense scrutiny" with which Nessim once regarded a devout servant, thereby hoping "to surprise the single-hearted-

ness which brought the old man happiness, peace of mind."

At the center of the quartet's design is the political intrigue which comes into its own in *Mountolive*. We discover that Nessim is the prime mover in a conspiracy to augment the power of Palestine, in order that the Copts may once more be invited to assume their dominant intellectual position in Egyptian affairs. Almost everybody is involved either in promoting or exposing the plot. Justine, Capodistria (the "Great Porn"), and, later, Narouz are full partners in it. Pombal and Pursewarden are "first political"; even Scobie is in the Secret Service, and enrolls Darley to break the code of the suspicious "bous-trophedon." A barber, a furrier, a valet, a police officer, an Egyptian minister, an ambassador, and a whore are all to a greater or less extent implicated. By such intricate plotting, Mr. Durrell is able to show that no one is able to remain aloof from the exploitation, in politics, of motives that are at root those of childish intrigue. The political world merely reflects a turmoil, a curiosity, and a frustration as primitive as the exploring hands and voices of two lovers. Spying begins with a simple voyeurism, and leads from there to research projects, to black magic (Da Capo) and skrying (Scobie, the Magzub, Clea), to the mysteries of the Cabala, and the intricacies of a widespread political maneuver. The intensity of the search for knowledge is justified by the reluctance with which the world gives up its secrets. Even street signs read like messages in code, while love is "every kind of conspiracy," a part of the "whole grand design of deception."

The tension which gives the quartet its power is the clash between the determination to put salt on the tail of Pyrrhonism, to end ignorance for ever, and the relativity of all knowledge which the form of the book unfolds. It is Mr. Durrell's distinction to have found the means of dramatizing this tension consistently, in plot, in imagery, and novelistic form. The quartet is essentially a monologue, composed prior to the writing of the novel which the narrator has planned, and which he does not begin to write until the last sentence of *Clea*. The effort to achieve artistic form, commencing with a series of jottings and short paragraphs alternating on different subjects and becoming increasingly coherent, parallels of course the attempt to find something definitively true to say, and a definitive attitude towards a work of art. The naturalistic third part of the quartet does not disturb this generalization, for the conclusion which *Mountolive* reaches is that the whole truth does not exist. The reader participates in the progressive revelation of the tale, and, at the beginning of *Mountolive*, it seems to him that one more retelling of the story — this time in the objective mode — would capture the truth permanently. The hope proves illusory, and Clea begins the process again. *Mountolive* closes with the acknowledged collapse of Nessim's intrigue, the death of Narouz, a more detailed account of Pursewarden's suicide, the total failure of *Mountolive's* protracted

and mental love-affair, and his humiliation in the child brothel. It is also especially in *Mountolive* that Mr. Durrell displays his pet theory about the power of a country to control a man's destiny. His characters are the children of their landscape, and plotters and counter-plotters discover, moreover, that they have set in motion forces which they are powerless to control. "The desire to explain everything" ends not only in ignorance, but in the recognition that, even were explanation possible, man would still be a helpless captive of his environment and his misdirected energies.

The last volume opens with Darley in a now familiar plight. "I had set out once more to store, to codify, to annotate the past before it was utterly lost—that at least was the task I had set myself. I had failed in it. . . . Yet if I had been enriched by the experience of this island interlude, it was perhaps because of this total failure to record the inner truth of the city . . . the very *failure* of words." But even in this statement of unsuccess is the belief that an "inner truth" exists if only the way to it could be found. A like assumption has sustained all the characters in their exploration of themselves and others, but Pursewarden alone holds the secret of the maze in which they struggle. Darley's realization of Pursewarden's uniqueness occurs as he reads the novelist's letters to Liza, letters in which he finds "illusion and reality . . . fused in one single blinding vision of a perfect incorruptible passion which hung over the writer's mind like a dark star—the star of death! . . . I realized that poetic or transcendental knowledge somehow cancels out purely relative knowledge. . . . There *was* no answer to the questions I had raised in very truth." Earlier, Darley had been aware that "the writer I was becoming was learning at last to inhabit those deserted spaces which time misses—beginning to live between the ticks of the clock, so to speak," and he now sees "how mysteriously the configuration of my own life had taken its shape from the properties of those elements which lie outside the relative life—in the kingdom which Pursewarden calls the 'heraldic universe.'" This "mythical city" or "mythopoeic reference which underlies fact" endows an artist not only with a special vision, but with tenderness and simplicity of heart.

Art can state nothing about the heraldic universe, though it can "convey" impressions of it. The "Great Inkling" can only be perceived poetically—absorbed by a kind of osmosis between the work of art and the reader—and the Alexandria Quartet is thus an attempt to do in prose what can properly be done only in poetry; it is written round and round a belief it can formulate but not embody, so inevitably one must object that in *Clea* Mr. Durrell has sacrificed art to explicitness. As Professor Kermode has said (*The London Magazine*, Feb. 1959, p. 55), the quartet "is, only half-secretly, about art . . . it offers an alternative nature with another physics, highly special and highly indeterminate," but if Pursewarden, the artist, is the key to the book, it must also be

said that no distinction can be made between the artist and the "true human being." They are identified on the penultimate page of the quartet, and Mr. Durrell himself has taken up the matter in the discussion recorded in *The Paris Review*. The artist-human being, whether he has written anything or not (e.g. the journalist John Keats in *Clea*), does not approach life as a spy, and, if he writes, he does so only to "grow him up" as a man; his works are cast aside like sloughed skins. (One thinks of Mr. T. S. Eliot telling the young Stephen Spender that he could understand a man wanting to write poems, but not wanting to "be a poet.") The inhabitants of the heraldic universe have no need to communicate with those outside, and they write to become truer possessors of their kingdom. The theory is embarrassing when starkly paraphrased, and easily recognizable as an old friend; but any theory which can produce a good work of art, as opposed to a disguised sermon, is permissible, and Mr. Durrell has demonstrated throughout his quartet how the relativity of knowledge impels a search for the transcendent. The art theory also explains the novel's severity towards literary critics — poor creatures who live miserably in the forebrain and insist on reducing works of art to statement. When Darley announces to Clea that he is meditating a book of criticism, she hits him savagely across the mouth, and, if this were not enough, Darley sees his blood-outlined teeth in the mirror as the fangs of an ogre. It would be useless to argue with a man so deft with metaphor.

We do not know how or when Pursewarden acquired his secret knowledge, to which he is unable to direct others except by pointing; we know only that the possession of it both isolates him and permits him to be less self-seeking than his friends, and we can guess that his discovery was preceded by a spiritual crisis. He that would gain his artist's hand must lose it, as Clea literally proves. The crisis of war is the deliberate setting for the developments of the last novel, and Darley and Clea are on the threshold of the mythical city when the quartet ends. They had both lost a good deal of their infantile desire during their years apart, but the process of their maturing is not complete when they meet again; their love is still tainted by the wish to obtain self-knowledge through possessing a hidden personality, and a mysterious visitation (furies at the window), culminating in the serious accident, intervenes in their growing happiness. "Concentration on the love-object and possession are the poisons," and "those who stand in a confessional relationship to ourselves can never love us, never truly love us." The lover before he becomes an artist (or a true human being) is incapable of more than a tangential relationship with his mistress, or she with him. Thwarted by the image of her that he sets up in place of the real person, all he can do is to stare at his own reflection, or at the reflection of another woman whom he "loves" more. Not only Darley and Clea, but most of the protagonists in the quartet must see their love-images destroyed before less selfish relation-

ships are possible, and Narouz's dying agony is caused by his inability to forsake the image of the Clea he worships. The effects of "love" can be far-reaching:

My "love" for her [Justine], Melissa's "love" for me, Nessim's "love" for her, her "love" for Pursewarden — there should be a whole vocabulary of adjectives with which to qualify the noun — for no two contained the same properties; yet all contained the one indefinable quality, one common unknown in treachery. Each of us, like the moon, had a dark side — could turn the lying face of "unlove" towards the person who most loved and needed us. And just as Justine used my love, so Nessim used Melissa's. . . . One upon the back of the other, crawling about "like crabs in a basket."

Darley's meditation in *Balthazar* shows that he sees the falsity clearly, but at this stage he is incapable of analyzing his love for Justine as mere self-love. Not only Justine, but all her lovers except Pursewarden suffer from "The Check," which inhibits any real outgoing of feeling. The theory is documented in great detail, and with sufficient subtlety to disguise its thesis-nature. It is worked into the substance and plot of the quartet by the innumerable mirror-images, and by the treatment of incest, transvestitism, and homosexuality.

The mirror throughout the quartet is a reflector of sound as well as of sight. Questions are asked of it, as in *Snow-White*, and the more elementary answers are forthcoming. A man can tell his age or his mood in the glass, or see himself briefly and superficially as others see him. Justine on one occasion is observed in five mirrors at once, as if each mirror reflected the facet seen by each of her lovers. Nessim discovers that Pursewarden has reported the conspiracy by a message printed on a mirror. Leila permits no mirrors in the harem after smallpox has disfigured her, while Clea repairs her damaged make-up in a glass after she has exposed herself to Pursewarden's ridicule. When a memory "catches sight of itself in a mirror," it knows itself for the partial, limited thing it is. Memory, in fact, on which the novel relies, preserves people like "coloured transfers of the mind," photographed reflections, as it were. Transcendental knowledge lies through the looking-glass, and entry is barred to all who can see nothing anywhere but images of their own desires. Every glance into the mirror is both a look into the only reality which ordinary men know, and a ploy among the "techniques of self-pursuit" — an effort to unseal one's cataracted eyes by self-exploration. The mirror device is used so frequently that it becomes a mannerism, but it serves as a constant reminder that the ubiquitous search for all kinds of information is but a projection of the desire to know oneself.

Pursewarden's affair with his sister occurred long before the action of the novel commences, and the child which was born to them is dead. Liza's blindness made her yet more dramatically the exact reflection of her brother, a vivid

illustration of the sickness with which the other characters remain afflicted. Pursewarden cured himself, and his suicide on hearing of Liza's love for Mountolive was not a desperate act of self-pity, but a disinterested act of love, to free her from all vestiges of guilt. Balthazar's complacent homosexuality has to undergo a disastrous upheaval before he knows himself and is free to continue his work. Clea, who acts as an ineffectual sister and confidante to most of the characters in the first three novels, must lose her "love" for Justine before she can even begin a promising relation with Darley. Scobie, living on his memories, walks the streets unhappily in a woman's clothes, and the lecherous Pombal disguises himself at the carnival as a monstrous woman. Amaril falls in love with a noseless girl and creates some kind of happiness for himself by repairing her with his own hands and to his own specifications. The quartet never implies that total unhappiness awaits those who cannot escape from their own reflections—it is not suggested that this is ever *completely* possible—but some men reach a compromise with their images, while others must continue exploring for the route into the heraldic universe. Success is partly miraculous, partly the result of long pursuit. The most ambiguous of the relationships is that of Nessim and Justine. Their marriage was built originally on an idea (the monomania of his Coptic plot), and when the conspiracy fails the marriage deteriorates at once into bitterness. At the end of the quartet, however, another grandiose scheme is under way, and Nessim and Justine are once more happy together. In spite of conduct which would have wrecked ten ordinary marriages, their marriage is a success, because the idea which unites them is analogous with the heraldic world which they would inhabit together-but-alone, were they but artists and true human beings.

The last pages of the quartet mimic the close of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Darley and Clea are separated, not droopingly indeed, but with hopeful hearts. Each has become an artist, and thus able to contemplate a lasting union in which neither will violate the solitude and independence of the other. Their entry into their new world has been symbolized in the final pages by the account of the celebration of the Mulid of El Scob. No longer just a legend in the Arab quarter where he lived, Scobie has been translated, by a series of happy accidents, into a local saint. He has passed into the heraldic universe which can be enjoyed but not explained. The earlier representations of this place, such as the story Justine told to the child prostitutes, or the talismanic hands which ward off evil spirits, are consummated in the centrifugal dance of the dervishes. Dead, Scobie has achieved what the living can only approximate, even when they have learned their lessons well in the school of negative capability, and in the healing powers attributed to his shrine we can read a metaphor for the healing powers of art.

Mr. Durrell has described his quartet as "really a sort of thesis in poetic illumi-

nation" (*Encounter*, Dec. 1959, p. 62), and so it is. Paraphrased, the thesis looks neither better nor worse than any other which has ever informed a work of art. It combines elements of Freud's and Einstein's thought and of romantic theories of poetry into an amalgam which is entirely Mr. Durrell's own. For that reason I cannot agree with the critics who have seen in the Alexandria Quartet a "new hope for the novel"; there is always hope while good novels continue to be written, but any novelist who tried to use Mr. Durrell's recipe would make only a hash. Mr. Durrell has been successful enough to make me doubt whether he can use the same formula again himself; his novels read like the culmination of a long development rather than the initiation of a new technique. The only trouble with the quartet, it seems to me, is that Mr. Durrell's style (which he defends by saying it comes naturally to him) becomes sometimes a glittering indulgence. The grand-scale descriptions are less faulty in this respect than the dialogue and the excerpts from diaries and letters. A reviewer, however, like Mr. Durrell's diplomats, is rarely happy unless he is giving a "balanced appraisal," and in view of what Mr. Durrell has successfully accomplished it would be better to hold one's carping tongue.

walter sutton

Criticism and Ideas

Karl Shapiro, *In Defense of Ignorance*. New York: Random House. \$4.00.

Louis Fraiberg, *Psychoanalysis & American Literary Criticism*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. \$5.95.

The reader of Karl Shapiro's essays entitled *In Defense of Ignorance* is likely to experience mixed, if not scrambled, reactions. Mr. Shapiro calls himself an anti-intellectual. For him the word *intellectual* is a synonym for *critic* and refers to someone who uses literature only for its ideas. The critic has neglected the proper concern of criticism — discrimination and the creation of works of art about works of art — for analysis, which is more properly the business of the scientist. Since poetry, unlike philosophy or history, is physical — accomplishing a materialization of experience rather than the abstraction of it — a criticism of concepts is false to its nature. It will be news to no one that in Shapiro's opinion the person chiefly responsible for the present state of affairs is T. S. Eliot, the archpriest of modernism, who has confused the functions of

poetry and criticism and established a twentieth-century tradition of "culture poetry." In this tradition such "intellectuals" as Pound and Yeats are placed beside the more influential Eliot. Over against them Mr. Shapiro establishes his own school of contemporary writers who are on the right track. These include William Carlos Williams, Dylan Thomas, D. H. Lawrence, and Henry Miller, all identified as *anti-* or at least *unintellectual* and all representing, to a greater or lesser degree, the vision and the "cosmic consciousness" of Walt Whitman. Between these groups, but within the field of Eliot's influence, stands the unrestful figure of W. H. Auden, the type of modern pseudo-poet and intellectual in transit, whose career is seen as a retreat from poetry to psychology to theology.

The violence of Shapiro's attack on Eliot involves him in confusions and inconsistencies. For one thing, he lumps Eliot, Pound, Yeats, and the New Critics together under the label of "moderns"—a pretty big lump to swallow—and then raids the arsenal of the New Criticism for ammunition to use against the "philosophical poetry" of the enemy. Yet Shapiro on the "semantic fallacy" sounds very much like Cleanth Brooks on the heresy of paraphrase; and his limitation of the meaning of the poetic word (which is a "not-word") to the poem in which it occurs ("The same word used in a line of prose and in a line of poetry is two entirely different words") is worthy of the most extreme contextualists among the New Critics.

It would be a mistake, however, to write Shapiro off as irresponsible because of inconsistencies in his position. The fact remains that his attitudes are part of a larger reaction against the dying order of the New Criticism—a reaction that is still in process of achieving definition. Also, Shapiro has many worthwhile things to say. He calls attention to the over-inflation of Eliot's reputation, particularly since the period of his conversion, and to the extent to which the body of Eliot's poetry is dependent for its form upon religious and theological concepts. He also recognizes that Auden, despite the deceptively avant-garde stance of his earlier years, has been essentially a conservative in poetic form as well as in his more recent ideas—that he has tended to go back to earlier forms rather than to develop new ones. Shapiro sees Auden's failure as the result of his intellectualizing emotion, producing versified thinking rather than poetry. It is true that Auden's poetry is discursive, concerned with ideas. And yet its weakness lies not so much in this quality—despite Shapiro's anti-intellectual argument—as in the fact that the ideas are stereotypes, clichés, and that there is lacking evidence of a powerful mind and sensibility reacting against the conventional ideas of whatever the period may be.

Shapiro also calls attention to the excellences of William Carlos Williams' poetry. He values its freshness and vitality and comments upon Williams' dislike of closed form, of the poem that clicks like a box. However, Williams' point of view is distorted to suit Shapiro's argument. Williams is made out to

be an unintellectually pure poet who eschews metaphor ("to Williams an apple is an apple") and who wishes to eradicate the line between "poetry and prose, between life and art." But to call Williams unintellectual is wide of the mark. It is true that Williams, in contrast with Auden, abhors fixed ideas and doctrinaire solutions, but he is very much an intellectual in his concern for the play of ideas as they arise from experience. The corollary of his "no ideas but in things" is "no things without ideas." Despite his desire for sensuous experience, "the beautiful thing," he is aware that sensuously pure poetry is an impossibility and that the distinguishing feature of poetry is a tension between experience and the valuation of experience in terms of thought and feeling. This interaction between experience and ideas, whether conceptual or emotive, is the metaphoric process, of which Williams is highly conscious, despite Shapiro's assertion that his poetry is without metaphor. In his involvement in the free play of ideas, Williams is actually more of an *intellectual* than Eliot. He is also more a poet of his age.

Shapiro's aesthetic is vitiated by his persistent anti-intellectual pose. Without ideas there can be neither poetry nor criticism. A poet's ideas are expressed through his poem as formal elements of which criticism must take account. Shapiro himself evaluates the work of the writers he discusses in terms of ideas. The poetry of Eliot and Pound is criticized for its expression of a hostility to science and democratic values. Whitman, together with his followers, is praised for his openmindedness, his democratic vision, and something called "cosmic consciousness."

What Shapiro does not seem to realize is that the hostility to science and to free thought of a poet like Eliot is itself a form of anti-intellectualism and that to classify Eliot as an intellectual and to criticize his ideas from a supposedly anti-intellectual point of view is to place both Eliot and himself in a false position. The intellectual, whether a creative writer or a critic, lives in a world of ideas, and he cannot turn his back upon this fact. Nor can Karl Shapiro. What he could do is to acknowledge their importance as one among many formal considerations in a literary work and base his own criticism frankly on his own reasoned system of ideas. Criticism is here to stay. We can't simply ignore it, as Shapiro recommends. Whatever we say about the formal nature of literature is criticism. It may be either good or bad, depending largely upon the soundness of its ideas. What we need is not no criticism, as Shapiro suggests, but more intellectually reputable criticism.

A study in contrast with Shapiro's freewheeling polemic is Louis Fraiberg's *Psychoanalysis & American Literary Criticism*. Mr. Fraiberg simply assumes the validity and importance of ideas in criticism and systematically discusses the relevance of classical Freudian psychoanalysis to the practice of six American literary critics. As a background for his essays on the critics he surveys the

writings of Freud and three of his colleagues as they bear on art and particularly literature. The treatment of this subject is economical and efficient, although less interesting in the chapters dealing with Freud and Ernest Jones than in the treatment of the less familiar work of Hanns Sachs and Ernst Kris. The discussion of Kris's *Psychoanalytical Explorations in Art* features the relation of ego psychology to art. Fraiberg is disturbed by the extent to which psychoanalysis has been associated with the concept of the unconscious in the mind of the public and of most critics, and he is eager to emphasize the importance of recent work in ego psychology, which takes account of the conscious control and craft that goes into the production of art and also of its social and communicative functions. He points out in his comment on Kris that simply the identification of the Oedipus complex as a recurrent motif in literature is of slight critical interest. What is important is the way in which the recurrent pattern has been shaped and modified by a conscious artist working within a particular social context. Freudian psychoanalysis thus provides support for a historical perspective in criticism in contrast to the mythic orientation of Jungian archetype criticism. Throughout these chapters Fraiberg calls attention to ego factors which must be taken account of in criticism and also to the open structure of Freudian thought in opposition to what he regards as the closed systems of Jung and Rank.

This discussion supplies the perspective for a survey of the use of psychoanalysis by six American critics. In Fraiberg's opinion, Van Wyck Brooks in his work on Twain used psychoanalysis as a gimmick rather than a critical tool and sentimentalized his subject by identifying Twain's unconscious with the "artist" in him. Joseph Wood Krutch is seen to have had a fair knowledge of Freud at the time of his work on Poe, but his study is classified as psychography rather than literary criticism. In *Expression in America*, Ludwig Lewisohn subordinated both psychology and criticism to ethics in developing his argument for the Puritan inhibition of American literature. The remaining three figures are given more credit as critics although not always as students of psychoanalysis. Fraiberg admires Edmund Wilson's work in criticism although he sees little evidence of familiarity with the later Freud. He distrusts the "wound and bow" theory as not acknowledging the status of art in reality and the control of the writer over his fantasies. He does admit the successful application of the theory in the connection between the psychic trauma of an artist and his work in the essays on Dickens and Kipling; and it might be pointed out that in the essay on Dickens particularly, Wilson is successful in combining in his criticism biographical, economic, psychoanalytical, and sociological considerations.

Another critic interested not only in the combination of approaches but in a grand synthesis of existing disciplines is Kenneth Burke, whom Fraiberg

accuses of equating psychoanalysis with a process of religious conversion and of reducing it to a system of verbal symbols without a scientific basis. Lionel Trilling is favored over the others as having a more complete understanding of Freudian concepts and as having extended them imaginatively in his own work through the idea of the mithridatic function of tragedy and through his use of ego psychology in the essay on Keats in *The Opposing Self* and in the lecture *Freud and the Crisis of Our Culture*.

In viewing Mr. Fraiberg's selection of critics for discussion, one can only wish that he had given less attention to such earlier individual figures as Brooks, Krutch, and Lewisohn and more to a broader survey of the contemporary scene to provide an evaluation of the numerous critics other than Wilson, Burke, and Trilling who have made use of Freudian ideas in their work over the past ten or twenty years. Yet within his established limits Fraiberg has developed a careful and responsible study which will undoubtedly remain as a standard authority. Furthermore, in calling attention to the importance of ego psychology for criticism, he is encouraging the further development of psychological criticism that views a work in its social context. (In doing so he also is reacting against the New Criticism, although in a different way from Karl Shapiro's.) And finally, by emphasizing the value of psychoanalysis as one of a number of non-literary disciplines which may be used in the formal analysis of literature, Mr. Fraiberg testifies to the importance of ideas for criticism, Mr. Shapiro's disclaimers notwithstanding.

sarah youngblood

Journey from Light to Dark

Louis Coxe. *The Middle Passage*. University of Chicago Press. \$3.75. Illustrations and Script by Gobin Stair.

The long narrative poem is rarely attempted by contemporary poets, perhaps because it has been a standard form for so many earlier poetic generations that it has not attracted young poets interested in finding their own new ways of expression. And yet, in view of the unexperimental — in fact, conservative — nature of most American poetry since the 40's, the traditionalism of the form would hardly seem a reason for its absence in contemporary work. It is likelier, I think, that the subjectivity characteristic of most contemporary poets has kept

them from attempting a kind of poetry which must be founded upon action, action plotted and paced with the skill of a novelist or dramatist, and informed by what on might call the passions appropriate to objectivity. But whatever the reasons for the dearth of narrative poetry, the appearance of Louis Coxe's *The Middle Passage* represents a major step in the recovery of the narrative for modern poetic uses. Seen in this light, *The Middle Passage* has a certain historical significance—it is a sign in the wind, showing new currents, new possibilities. But it is also a significant poem in its own right, and its successes, achieved through brilliant risks, are notable.

The biggest risk which Coxe has dared is that of being charged with taking no risks at all. Probably most of the discussion which *The Middle Passage* creates will begin with its "derivations." The parallels with Conrad and Melville are obvious and pervasive, and certainly the easiest way of treating (and discrediting) Coxe's narrative of a sea-voyage into evil is simply to say that he has followed in the steps of his masters. Coxe's collaboration, in 1949, on the dramatic version of *Billy Budd* doubtless taught him a great deal about Melville, to whom he paid homage in his notes on the play, and about the elaboration of symbolic structures; but *The Middle Passage* is not a verse redaction of *Billy Budd* or *Moby Dick* or *Heart of Darkness*, despite the clearcut influence of all of these upon Coxe's conception of his own poem. Similarly, the choice of blank verse, and of a period setting (Salem and the New England shipping industry in the 1840's), might be seen as a conservative if not regressive poetic procedure—for what risk lies in a retreat from contemporary experience? But such a question would seem to assume that the only way of exploring contemporary experience is by writing free verse about missiles, suburban life, standardization, and so on. The power of Coxe's poem resides in its relevance as a commentary upon those elements of human experience which, by their permanence, have the quality of absolutes. By attempting to write a universal poem, scaled to an action which is at once exciting narrative, trenchant social criticism, and moral commentary, Coxe has taken an ambitious risk, and he has produced the finest book of his career.

The Middle Passage recounts the voyage of the *Happy Delivery*, a whaling-ship converted to use as a slave-ship, from Salem to the African coast, then back by the middle passage to Havana. The protagonist of the poem is Canot, a 19-year-old apothecary, no sailor by preference or experience, who ships on the voyage because of the tempting salary offered for his medical services. To Canot, money is not just a means of realizing "sensual images, / Images of what the stuff will buy" but a means of power. Before the voyage is done, he has the power he seeks; by a play of chances turned to his advantage, he has taken control of the ship and its valuable cargo of slaves, and has survived the storm, sickness and mutiny which make up the nightmarish return passage to Havana.

In the process, he has also lost his soul, but it is by no means certain that he had had a complete soul to lose: "Nature has its limits / And nature's hold on Canot was precarious."

Canot is at all times the center of the poem, and insofar as he is a New Englander, driven by a lust for money, he is an extension and crystallization of the pious Yankee capitalists who hire him; he embodies their motives in an unsentimental and terrifying purity of drive. Because the identifications between Canot and Yankee capitalism are implied again and again throughout the poem, Canot becomes a kind of culture hero, representing not only 19th century capitalism but "the American experience" in extreme forms of degradation and self-corruption. It is not only his money-lust, power-lust, which makes these cultural identifications meaningful; it is also his worship of chance, the god of amorality which brings him power; and his cold brilliance of practical efficiency, the rights and wrongs of his situation lost in the exercise of "pure technique." Canot's contempt for "the moral man" is a contempt for inefficiency. Yet Canot, metallic, amoral, finally beyond all humane impulse or sense of guilt, has his own clarity of self-knowledge. Twice, at crucial moments of self-revelation, he says that he "went out too far," and once:

'I'll never go back home. I've gone too far.
You're Southern — you don't know. Once a New Englander
Heads out and away, there's no end to his travels. . . .'

One of the most interesting aspects of the characterization Coxe creates is this paradox of cold New England rigidity spun full circle into satanic furies of self-indulgence.

Canot is the center of the poem, but he is so by concentrating in himself an intensity of evil fragmented in the other characters. Although his story dominates the book, it is narrated by another man, a sailor and Canot's contemporary, whose sensibility is the shaping and interpreting force in the poem. It is the narrator, forty years after Canot's voyage, who states the meaning of that voyage:

We shrank from him in life. In death he owns us,
Friends of his bosom, comrades, sons in evil,
We who simply lived while Canot died — he must have
Night after night on that first middle passage,
Died out of youth, out of innocence, romance
And — it may sound foolish, out of the real —
Died into Power, into Canot pure.

The voice of the narrator creates the structure and tones the action of the whole poem, and its distinctive inflections are heard from the first, as in the

opening lines of the poem, with their easy conversational rhythm and natural chime and fall of sea-terms:

It was New England April at the docks:
You know the kind: wet wind, a threat of snow
While sky plays open and shut. That kind of day —
A fine day for hauling south by east
And making good your seven or eight knots.
The tide was full at seven, and by eight
Two Indiamen of Derby's with their sails
Loose at the bunts were ready for the wind,
And old man Derby stood on his own wharf
With his words of Godspeed and bring back the goods.

We hear in this last — "Godspeed and bring back the goods" — the ironic inflection which is to play over all the material of the narrative. It is the voice of a man now old enough to view both life and death with equal eye, critical, alert, and self-aware. He is the appropriate narrator of Canot's voyage, for he sees himself in Canot — or enough to terrify him — and his reflections, descriptions, parenthetical asides to his listener, all combine to suggest the implicit drama of his own life — behind Canot's, in shadow of that darker life, but there, and full of its own measure of guilt, terror, and chance. The points at which their experience duplicates are those of action, rather than of motive or of temperament, and the duplicating action is suggested most strongly in the passages of the poem treating Canot's initiations: first into the "slaughterhouse odor" of a slave-ship, then into the "fecund, moist and rotten" world of the African slave-barracoons, where Canot has his first knowledge of a woman. Both of these experiences are the same, initiations into darkness, and in both Canot and the narrator are closely identified.

But the narrator is not, after all, Canot, and it is most clearly his special relation to the sea which distinguishes the narrator (and his listener, another sailor, who hears the night-long story of Canot's voyage):

He was no sailor and a sailor's ghosts
Would never haunt him — not like you and me
Who wake at night, a thousand miles of land
Turning us while we lie there and smell salt
Or hear in morning traffic the groan of shrouds
And for that instant, crowded as a grave,
All oceans claim us. Ghosts moving among ghosts,
Poor landlocked sailors, old, rich, crammed with our sins
But innocent when we can smell the sea.

The presence of the sea is everywhere in the poem, conveyed not simply through the consistent use of nautical terms but through the narrator's own sea-conscious, sea-haunted memory. The reader's sense of this presence gives another dimension to the quietly underwritten lines which close the poem, the narrator's words to his listener:

Before we die, we'll take that harbor cruise
Both of us, and after one last feel of sea
Let the ground have us, since the sea will not.

The presence of the sea is also conveyed in the rhythms and pace of the poem. The verse, freely varied and modulated upon a norm of iambic pentameter, is accommodated to each demand of the material, whether for visual description of a scene:

The men had come topside to sleep. The heat
Below decks drove them up. Gathered in knots
At the main-chains, by the capstan, quiet and still
They waited sleepless, listening, sniffing the night
While under the southern coal-hole, pit of black
Unstarred, the vessel swirled up flakes of light
That washed off aft and fell to dark again. . . .

or for rapid narration of action moving into symbolic description:

Ali that night they worked,
They roused the blacks out, took their irons off
And set them to the pumps. Burns formed a line
From hold to bulwarks, passing corpses up,
And by dawn the holds were clear and the water level
Below their ankles. Now her head was high
And she rode like a gull, swinging to face the wind
And yearning for her sails. By noon the sun
Had dried and warmed her, though the wraiths of steam
Came up like rotten breath in carious mouths.

There are instances, too, of straight generalization, of philosophizing, but relatively few within the body of the whole poem, and almost all of them arise easily and naturally out of the structure of the narrative. The most memorable passages of the poem are those in which action and idea, image and rhythm, fuse, as in the lines quoted below. Their context is the nightmarish storm of the middle passage; Canot has discovered infectious blindness among his crew, and has worked all night among the men to save them for his uses, in a furious will to bring the ship, and his profits, to port. At dawn, another ship passes:

The night drained off

As the world tilted. Canot saw it spill
 And as he waited for the sea to turn,
 A hull loomed from the mist broad on the bow,
 Hove-to, her rigging slack and dripping damp.
 On the windward ratlines one man stood alone
 And waved. His voice came faint as a wraith of fog:
 'Position! Give us position! We are blind.
 All hands are blind. Please. Tell us where we are . . .'
 The mist divided them. The *Happy Delivery*
 Slid sighing into fog, the voice choked off
 And Canot had for memory that vision:
 A black hull riding out of mist, one man,
 His single voice as piping as a tern's,
 A mirror and an echo. . . .

The rhythms, voices, themes of *The Middle Passage* are various and rich. Like all good books, it is resonant in the mind, and if, in its study of corruption, it holds up repellent images of the human soul — "The fit of Adam's flesh undone, the journey / From dark to light turned back" — the province of art has always been large enough to contain an Iago, a Kurtz, a Canot.

james wright

The Few Poets of England and America

The New American Poetry, 1945-1960, edited by Donald M. Allen.
 New York: Grove Press, 1960. \$1.95.

Our age, as nearly everyone knows, is cluttered by vanity; and so it is perhaps natural that it should also be cluttered by poets. The age is also frightened; and vain men, as always, huddle together for mutual reassurance against the cold. Two signs of the time are those two anthologies, *The New Poets of England and America* and *The New American Poetry*. In spite of certain ostensible differences concerning which sympathetic critics of each anthology

have been rather more than sufficiently vocal, the two books are astonishingly similar in their vanity, in the general effect of dullness which they produce, and in their depressing clutter of anxious poetasters shrieking their immortality into the void.

It is my purpose here to discuss briefly the work of the few poets in the Grove anthology which I myself found to be seriously beautiful. Although the names of these writers are frequently associated with one gang (Mr. Allen Tate's wittily precise term for "generation") or other; and although it is hard to identify them in the midst of the gray fog laid down by much of the Grove anthology; still, they have produced an excellent body of work. Each is distinct from the others; and the identity of each is more easily discovered and enjoyed when it is freed from the anthological prison. There are two Grove authors whose poems I enjoy; but I do not intend to discuss them here, because neither has yet published enough to justify any responsible evaluation. I am thinking of LeRoi Jones and Paul Blackburn. The rest I will leave to the kindness of Time, and silently pray the same kindness for myself.

Before I make more detailed statements about the fine poems of Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley, Denise Levertov, Gary Snyder, and Brother Antoninus, I want to note one of the most interesting similarities between the Grove and Meridian anthologies: the absence from either book of poems by some poets who are in some ways finer than any of the poets who are included. I am sure that every disgruntled reader will have favorites of his own, whose omission he resents. The omissions which I have in mind, however, are those on which I think a good many serious readers would agree; the poems of James Dickey, Anne Sexton, and John Logan. Now, I am sure that these omissions can be adequately explained. For example, the astonishing poems of Mrs. Sexton did not begin to appear in print until rather recently; besides, the editors of anthologies cannot be reasonably expected to anticipate forces of nature. The omissions of Mr. Dickey and Mr. Logan are more difficult to understand, but I will leave explanations to editors. I wish merely to record the strange sense of satisfaction that I feel concerning the three omissions. Perhaps what pleases me is that the omissions only confirm my own feeling about the poetry of these three authors: that such breadth of imaginative sympathy and generosity of intelligence are qualities which do not conveniently fit into gangs.

The work of the best Grove poets does not conveniently fit into gangs either. Let me try to release these fine poets.

Robert Creeley has now published eight books, the first of which appeared in 1952. His most recent work is to be found in *A Form of Women* (New York: Jargon/Corinth, 1959), a book which is beautiful in its purity of diction and in its expression of a real man speaking with a kind voice. Mr.

Creeley is widely admired by many of his contemporaries, not only for the sensitivity of his poems but also for the integrity of his life. He has not attained a wide reading public—not in the sense that, say, Jack Kerouac, Herman Wouk, Allen Ginsberg, and other ornaments of our age have done. I would like to feel that more people are discovering Mr. Creeley's poems, but I say this for the sake of the public itself. I doubt if Mr. Creeley himself is very deeply troubled by the fact that his work as an artist has not been transformed into something like Mr. Kerouac's—that is, a consumer's-item, to be considered less the work of a struggling artist than a mass-produced fantasy designed to mirror the escapist daydreams of middle-class people who despise their own everyday lives with sullen despair. There is a good deal of emotion in Mr. Creeley's poetry; but it is not sullen, and if despair appears it is the kind which the poet confronts and faces down. His poems embody the imagination of a man who is not afraid of genuine feeling in his personal struggles to live day by day in the world, and who contends with feeling in a manner invariably marked by dignity and grace. He is able to create poems out of many feelings; but perhaps the one which is most noteworthy is the feeling of love. Mr. Creeley is one of the truest and most nourishing love poets alive. I can do no better than to illustrate his skill by quoting one of his short love poems in its entirety. It is called "The Whip":

I spent a night turning in bed,
my love was a feather, a flat

sleeping thing. She was
very white

and quiet, and above us on
the roof, there was another woman I

also loved, had
addressed myself to in

a fit she
returned. That

encompasses it. But now I was
lonely, I yelled,

but what is that? Ugh,
she said, beside me, she put

her hand on
my back, for which act

I think to say this
wrongly.

Robert Duncan is another excellent poet whose work is measured and spare, although many of his poems are long. The diction is uncluttered, like that of Mr. Creeley; but, whereas the sound of the latter's verse is like that of a human voice speaking, Mr. Duncan's considerable talent most often assumes the form and measure of a human voice singing. He is a lyrical poet in the most traditional sense: that is, he is a musician. I do not mean that his poems, as such, need to be set to music. And I do not mean that they drip like Swinburne. At his best, he is a master of rhetoric in the Elizabethan sense of the word. Employing the simplest diction and rhythm, he can lead the reader to expect a certain pattern of sound, and then he varies it, so that the music of his verse produces a fusion of fulfillment and surprise which is one of the chief delights created by such a great lyric poet as, say, Thomas Campion. Since Mr. Duncan's poems are often longer than those of Creeley, it is more difficult to give a correct impression of his range by quoting a single one. Here are the first and last stanzas of his shorter poem, "The Temple of the Animals," which I have long admired for the restrained precision of its music:

The temple of the animals has fallen into disrepair.
The pad of feet has faded.
The panthers flee the shadows of the day.
The smell of musk has faded but lingers there . . .
lingers, lingers. Ah, bitterly in my room.
Tired, I recall the animals of last year:
the altars of the bear, tribunals of the ape,
solitudes of elephantine gloom, rare
zebra-striped retreats, prophecies of dog,
sanctuaries of the pygmy deer. . . .

I have seen the animals depart,
forgotten their voices, or barely remembered
— like the last speech when the company goes
or the beloved face that the heart knows,
forgets and knows —
I have heard the dying footsteps fall.
The sound has faded, but lingers here.

Ah, bitterly I recall
the animals of last year.

Mr. Duncan has published a good many books and is soon to have a new one. The best introduction to his work remains the *Selected Poems* (San Francisco, 1959). However, this selection is taken only from his first four books. There ought to be another selection from his more recent work.

Denise Levertov is another of the best poets in the Grove anthology. Though still quite young, she has published four books and, more significantly, has gone through several distinct stages of development as a poet. In each of these, she has produced work of real merit. She published her first book in England, where she was born. Then (as she tells us in her modest and interesting note), after her marriage and subsequent residence in America, she began to feel "the stylistic influence of William Carlos Williams." Although some reviewers of her most recent book (*With Eyes at the Back of Our Heads*, New Directions, 1959) affected to discover in her American poems a mere imitation of Dr. Williams' manner, she has actually moved beyond her amazing apprenticeship in the use of American speech-rhythms into an area wholly her own: a world where the ordinary objects of everyday American life are rediscovered and recreated from the inside, according to the spontaneously developing laws of a thrilling poetic imagination. Miss Levertov shares with Mr. Duncan and Mr. Creeley the possession of authentic imagination, in the absence of which, of course, all concern with craftsmanship is mere pedantry. However, she also shares with these others the awareness that the imagination carries its own responsibilities for craftsmanship, and therefore we find her poems to be genuine creations of a disciplined art. The music of her verse has something in common with that of Creeley: it is spare, direct, measured more according to a voice speaking than a voice singing. But such restraint allows her to speak to the reader with inflections unmistakably her own in a poetry whose recognizable charm is all the more appealing for its being based upon an imagination of tough creative force. She is nearly always excellent; and since, like Creeley's, her poems are most often brief, I can give an entire poem as a fair illustration of her vigorous work. It is called "The Hands":

Don't forget the crablike
hands, slithering among the keys.
Eyes shut, the downstream
play of sound lifts away from
the present, drifts you
off your feet: too easily let off.
So look: that almost painful
movement restores the pull, incites
the head with the heart: a tension, as of

actors at rehearsal, who move
this way, that way, on a bare stage, testing
their diagonals, in common clothes.

One of the mysteries of poetry is that there is no constant relation between the skill of a poet in his poems and the clarity of the same poet in his discussions of his craft. The poems of Mr. Gary Snyder are so unpretentious that one might expect him to decline comment on his own art. And yet he is among the most articulate of his contemporaries when it comes to explaining what he is trying to do and how he is trying to do it. In one of the "Statements on Poetics" which the editor of the Grove anthology, Mr. Donald M. Allen, has thoughtfully included, Snyder has the following to say about his way of writing: "I've just recently come to realize that the rhythms of my poems follow the rhythm of the physical work I'm doing and life I'm leading at any given time — which makes the music in my head which creates the line. Conditioned by the poetic tradition of the English language & whatever feeling I have for the sound of poems I dig in other languages. 'Riprap' is really a class of poems I wrote under the influence of the geology of the Sierra Nevada and the daily trail-crew work of picking up and placing granite stones in tight cobble patterns on hard slab. 'What are you doing?' I asked old Roy Marchbanks. — 'Riprapping' he said. His selection of natural rocks was perfect — . . . I tried writing poems of tough, simple, short words, with the complexity far beneath the surface texture. In part the line was influenced by the five- and seven-character line Chinese poems I'd been reading, which work like sharp blows on the mind."

There could be no more lucid introduction to Mr. Snyder's poems, which have so far appeared in two volumes: *Riprap* (Ashland, Mass.: Origin, 1959) and *Myths & Texts* (New York: Totem/Corinth, 1960). None of his poems included in the Grove anthology is short enough to quote here. However, since I am primarily interested in the good poets and only secondarily in the anthology itself, I feel free to quote the following short poem from *Myths & Texts*, in order to illustrate Mr. Snyder's work at its most characteristic:

Out the Greywolf valley
in late afternoon
after eight days in the high meadows
hungry, and out of food,
the trail broke into a choked
clearing, apples grew gone wild
hung on one low bough by a hornet's nest.
caught the drone in tall clover
lowland smell in the shadows

then picked a hard green one:
watched them swarm.
smell of the mountains still on me.
none stung.

What strikes me most deeply about this modest little poem is its precision and the purpose which the precision is made to serve. In a few spare lines, the poet makes me feel the presence of a living man in a living place, many of whose vivid details I am now familiar with. He has made the language record his own human presence, and he has been able to say something about his own deep, fundamentally human experience in that place. He has made me feel a little more at home in the world.

This short poem by no means fully represents Snyder's work. It is a poem of solitude. In his other poems, he explores the landscape of the western United States — its physical look and feel, its laborers, its unassuming and humorous animals, its perpetual freshness — with a powerful delicacy all his own. He is perhaps the only living American poet who can use swear-words and make them sound as if they were spoken by a human being instead of by an IBM. Finally, his very patience and modesty enable him to see ghosts — the real ghosts of men who once lived and worked in real places that have names; and these ghosts embody Snyder's power of revealing a historical dimension to the imagination of the reader, a power which Robert Lowell and Louis Simpson have been almost alone in possessing among recent American poets. Snyder's ghosts are well illustrated by the following passage, which I find profoundly moving:

A ghost logger wanders a shadow
In the early evening, boots squeak
With the cicada, the fleas
Nest warm in his blanket-roll
Berrybrambles catch at the staggered pants
He stumbles up the rotten puncheon road
There is a logging camp
Somewhere in there among the alders
Berries and high rotting stumps
Bindlestiff with a wooden bowl
(The poor bastards at Nemi in the same boat)
What old Seattle skidroad did he walk from
Fifty years too late, and all his
money spent?

Gary Snyder's poems are attractive in their ability to contain both tenderness and a certain rough honesty at the same moment and to express these manly

qualities in the same breath. It should be unnecessary to say that gentleness and courage in dealing with a subject matter very close to life as the creatures live it are primarily matters of personal character; and that, where the character is lacking, no amount of literary skill can substitute for it. And yet, when the character is there to be expressed, how seemly is the effect of a sensitive craft! I find Snyder's work invariably humane and intelligent, and it makes me feel the dignity of being human. There has been a good deal of noise about bringing poetry back to the subject matter of real life. I'm sure that few people would admit outright that they want poetry to be dead. Everybody is against sin. But the real issue is to determine what is meant by "life." It is a question that can be answered, as Mr. Snyder has answered it, only by recording the actual physical details of living things, and allowing those things to speak — or simply exist — in and for themselves. Snyder's patient simplicity holds a lesson for all poets of any "school" whatever.

Of course, a man may struggle in his own solitude to make sense out of the creatures of the natural world; and the struggle may be expressed through the style of the language itself, so that entire poems may be dramatic stages where the interest lies not only in the poet's subject but also in his very effort to grasp it. Such is the case with Brother Antoninus, the last of the poets with whom I am here concerned. Although the Grove anthology contains only three of his poems, they are well chosen. We see him struggling to subdue himself in order to pay attention to the objective and miraculous existence of natural things and creatures. The dramatic impact of his poems derives largely from his struggle to see and feel the creatures come alive and endure on their own terms — which turn out to be God's terms, and miraculous. Yet the miracle of living things in Brother Antoninus's poems is anything but sweetish or merely consoling. Time and again we are forced to recognize that the full responsibility of a human being involves his willingness to recognize the frequent division between comfort and magnificence, life and sloth. There is drama in his own struggle to come alive so as to allow his subjects to come alive on their own terms. Brother Antoninus has finally achieved a language in which a natural melodiousness is often suddenly wrenched into cacophony. It is as though the poet refused to allow the language itself to subside into slick rhetoric. Consequently, the moral passion, always alert, saves the poem for the imagination. I am delighted to find the beautiful poem, "A Canticle to the Waterbirds" included in this anthology. Brother Antoninus's deliberate rejection of easy tunefulness, his constant effort to subordinate the language to the vision — an effort which recalls the similar drama in the language of Hardy's poems — may be illustrated by the following quotation, in which the poet is addressing the birds:

You leave a silence. And this for you suffices, who are not of
the ceremonies of man,

And hence are not made sad to now forgo them.
 Yours is of another order of being, and wholly it compels.
 But may you, birds, utterly seized in God's supremacy,
 Austere living under His austere eye —
 Yet may you teach a man a necessary thing to know,
 Which has to do of the strict conformity that creaturehood entails,
 And constitutes the prime commitment all things share.
 For God has given you the imponderable grace to *be* His verification,
 Outside the mulled incertitude of our forsenic choices;
 That you, our lessers in the rich hegemony of Being,
 May serve as a testament to what a creature is,
 And what creation owes.

I would like to conclude with a few comments on a matter which troubles me. Some of the good poets in the Grove anthology have spoken respectfully, and even gratefully, of the teachings of Mr. Charles Olson; and, as one perceptive reviewer noted, Mr. Olson "looms" over the anthology. I myself do not feel that his work "looms" because of the excellence of his poems. They seem to me very much inferior to the work of any of the poets whom I have discussed in this essay. Neither can Mr. Olson be said to "loom" over the book because of the clarity of his prose. I have read his famous essay "Projective Verse" several times now, and I confess that I still am not quite sure I understand it. Now, it is obvious that I might be refusing to understand — out of stupidity or the cheap desire to be clever. Stupidity is beyond my control; but I am certainly not trying to be cute. I am simply admitting my failure to grasp the plain sense of such passages as the following:

"Now (3) the *process* of the thing, how the principle can be made so to shape the energies that the form is accomplished. And I think it can be boiled down to one statement (first pounded into my head by Edward Dahlberg): ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION. It means exactly what it says, is a matter of, at *all* points (even, I should say, of our management of daily reality as of daily work) get on with it, keep moving, keep in, speed, the nerves, their speed, the perceptions, theirs, the acts, the split second acts, the whole business, keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen. And if you also set up as a poet, USE USE USE the process of all points, in any given poem always, always one perception must must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER!"

I think I understand Mr. Olson down as far as the phrase "is a matter of" in the third sentence of the passage. After "of," I lose him completely, so help me. "Of" what? I had similar trouble following the meaning of the sentences throughout the essay.

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